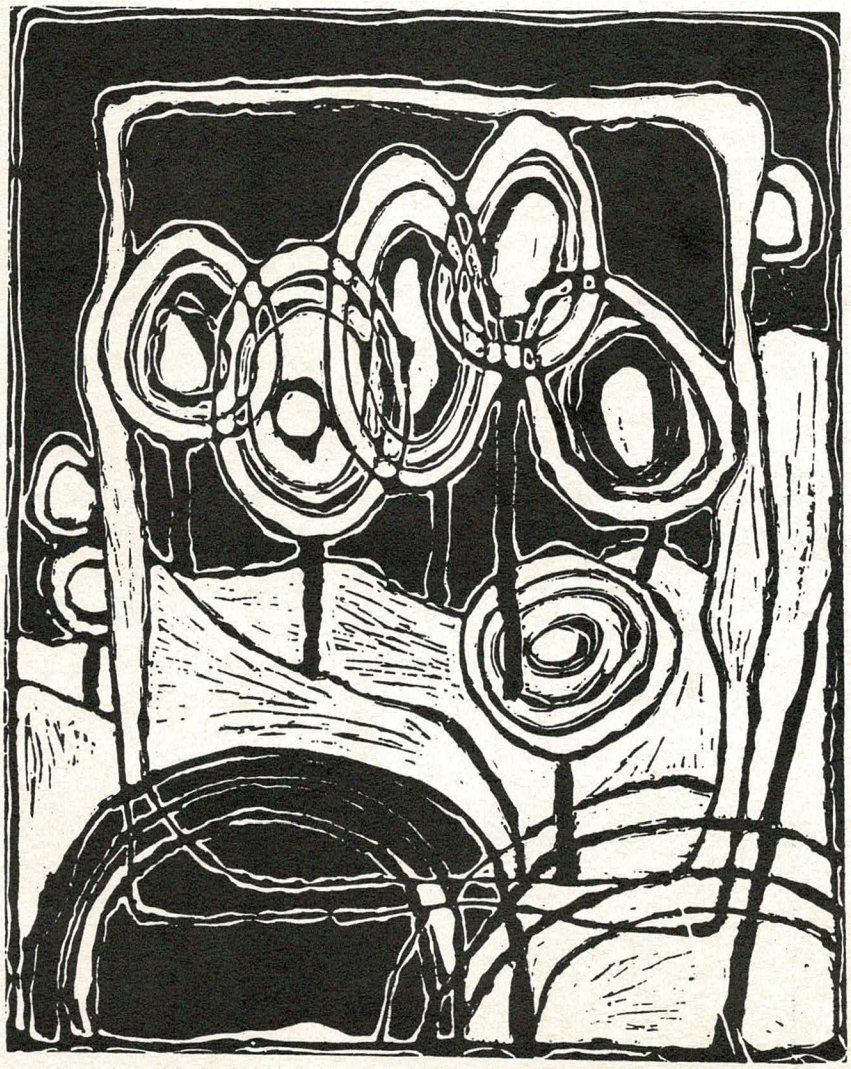
WOMBAT FOREST SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2001

WOMBAT FOREST SOCIETY NEWSLETTER, Jan 2001

p.o.box 428, daylesford, 3460
ph/fax: 5348-1748

WFS COMMITTEE
President - Tim Anderson 5348-1141
Treasurer - Peter O'Mara 5348-1154
Secretary - Hugh Burnham 5348-3616
Commitee Members - Loris Duclos 5156-0922
John Endacott 5345-7570
Emma Kosh 5368-6513
Jennifer McCulloch 53484945
Maryanne Faulks 0408 996 764

Meeting Schedule 2001 Evening meetings 7.30pm

Tues 6th Feb	Powerhouse Art Space, Daylesford
Tues 6th March	Powerhouse Art Space, Daylesford
Tues 3rd April	Powerhouse Art Space, Daylesford
Tues 1st May	Powerhouse Art Space, Daylesford
Tues 6th June	Community Hall, Blackwood
Tues 5th July	Powerhouse Art Space, Daylesford
Tues 7th Aug	Powerhouse Art Space, Daylesford
Tues 4th Sept	Powerhouse Art Space, Daylesford
Tues 2nd Oct	Powerhouse Art Space, Daylesford
Tues 13th Nov	Community Hall, Blackwood
Tues 4th Dec	Powerhouse Art Space, Daylesford

Powerhouse Art Space: 9 Vincent St, Daylesford
Please ring before meeting to check scheduling

Your Membership Status

According to our records the following is our understanding of your membership. If your records indicate ortherwise, or your address label is incorrect, please let us know so that we can update our lists.

LAST PAID / /
(date)

NOW DUE
PAID UP UNTIL
/ / (date)

We are continually amazed and gratified by the generosity of members and supporters of WFS. If you have previously donated money in addition your membership fees, please accept our grateful thanks. We continue to rely on your support to maintain our campaign.

Membership renewal forms are located inside the back page of this newsletter.

HELLO EVERYONE

Hello Members & Friends

Apologies for the lateness of this newsletter due to no particular reason but plenty. This newsletter is full of all sorts. The Wombat Forest Society has had an extremely busy time during the last few months on many levels including our first direct forest action in Bullarto. The West Victorian RFA hangover had no time to materialise and the campaign has continued to both strengthen and diversify. Our AGM was extremely well attended and reflective of our post-RFA strategy to provide a more membership inclusive approach to our campaign. The new e-mail network, although sometimes problematic, has opened up for the opportunity for further member participation. All meeting attendances have increased accordingly. Looking ahead, the Wombat Forest Society is looking to re-evaluate our current charter, continue political lobbying, establish our plantation position, push for a fauna/flora analysis of the Wombat Forest and further increase our relationships with all local Wombat Forest communities. Most excitedly, the next National Forest Summit will be held in Hepburn Springs (April 27-29) with the Wombat Forest Society playing an important participatory and organizational role. The Wombat Forest Society has been a long-term participant in previous National Forest Summits and believe that the inclusive involvement of regional campaigns is vital to the complexity, intellect and vigor of any broader movement. Once again, the National Forest Summit will enable us all to share our unique local campaign approach with other forest groups throughout Australia and provide wider focus for our local forest issues.

As always, thank-you all for ongoing membership, donations and support.

We look forward to Wombat Forest 2001.

And beyond.

There is a Buzz LightYear In Us All.

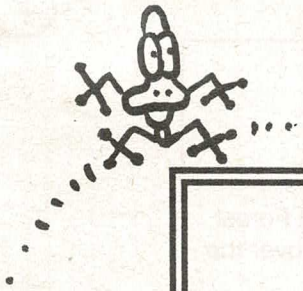


WOMBAT FOREST BUS TOURS

The Wombat Forest Society will continue running our quarterly bus tours into the Wombat Forest recommencing on Sunday, 25th March, 2001. The bus tours will leave from the Powerhouse (9 Vincent Street, Daylesford) at 10pm. The forest tours will last for approximately 2 hours and cost $5 depending on numbers. The Wombat Forest tours are an ideal way to familarise yourself with local forest issues and find out more about our ongoing campaign and future directions.

To make a booking, please ring John Endacott On 5345-7570
or the Wombat Forest Society on 5348-1748







WFS CHARTER

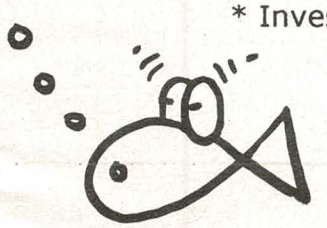
At our recent AGM, concerns were raised regarding the Wombat Forest Society Charter & an undertaking was given that this would be reviewed after consultation with our membership and local community. Our original charter was completed in April 1994, so it would seem that it would be an appropriate time to review regrdless. Any changes to this Statement Of Purpose would have to be validated at a Special General Meeting in accordance to the Incorporations Act, 1981. At this stage, I have provided a copy of our original charter (1994) and a possible working framework for some change. The Wombat Forest Society will be taking any suggestions, preferably written, from the WFS membership and present these for our next newsletter in May 2001.

WFS Statement Of Purpose, 1994

1. To end export woodchipping in the Wombat Forest Society by seeking the Federal Government to cancel the export woodchip licence for Midways Forest Products
2. To reduce all timber quotas to sustainable levels
3. To get DCNR (now DNRE) to adopt environmetally sustainable management techniques
4. To transfer CSR to plantations
5. To campaign with local residents as our campaign base
6. To look at ways to establish the "Geoff Williams Reserve" at South Lyonville
7. To encourage the department and industry to establish timber plantations on degraded farm land adjoining the Wombat Forest
8. To survey and nominate a Reserve System to adequately protect the environmental and community values of the Wombat Forest.

Wombat Forest Society, 2001
Suggested Aims & Objectives

* Sustainable native forest management
* To balance broad needs of human communities & wildlife of forests
* Stop industrialised forest management and logging
* Community forest management
* Social justice
* Research & challenge agency of forest mangement
* Facilitate inclusive local interaction with the forest
* Provide regional support to other non-timber stakeholders
* Oppose current woodchipping practices
* End export woodchipping
* Investigate & encourage restoration/reforestation possiblities







WUPS UPDATES

Last year, Wombat Forest Society sent a letter to Peter Keppels, DNRE Commercial Forest Manger,stating our intention of taking DNRE to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal over the 'Proposed Wood Utilisation Plans' for the Midlands FMA for the 2001-2004 period.
It is the WFS's belief that the intensity of coupes in the Wombat Forest is extreme. The WFS further believes that DNRE's interpretation of the Code of Forest Practice in relation to adjacency criteria and SW2 cuts is wrong. The evidence is that SW2 cuts leave a coupe in essentially and structurally the same as an equivalent age clearfall coupe. Your intensity of harvesting will impact in a way that more than acceptable from a catchment perspective.
The proposed WUPs have many coupes abutting each other that contravene the adjacency criterion.
It is clear that DNRE have failed to manage the Midlands sustainably. The WUPs may reflect the area needed by NRE to supply timber volumes, but to need to cut around 13% of an area in 3years will compromise other values that NRE is obliged to look after.
The WFS has attempted to get DNRE to face reality and reduce logging to a sustainable level. Regretfully DNRE appears unwilling or unable to achieve this. The WFS is therefore forced to the position of using other State Authorities to intercede.
The WFS have also successfully appealled against Midway's assumed CSR License, that has somehow grown to 80 000 tons. We believe that given the reductions in the announced Consultative Paper's, and further WFS analysis, that there are no grounds for the granting of this license. The WFS believes that the sustainable yield for the Midlands should be around 25 000m3/p.a.
For DNRE to have targeted such an intensity of harvesting between Daylesford and Blackwood, straight after the RFAs, appears to be an act of arrogance. The WFS believes that this intensity of operations in this area will push the broader community into totally rejecting timber harvesting in the region and will herald the start of 'forest protests' in the Wombat. Enough is enough. The community has been tolerant until now, what is proposed will be the proverbial straw that breaks the camel's back. The Wombat Forest Society has not done a formal response to the this years WUPs as the RFAs have taken our time. This does not mean that we will be silent on what you propose.
At the moment, the Wombat Forest Society is carrying out investigative surveying in the Wombat Forest looking at adjacency issues. Already, we have met in the forest with Michael Fox, Friends Of The Lederderg Gorge, to discuss his groups concerns regarding logging near Backwood. We will be holding a strategy meeting at the Powerhouse Art Space on Tuesday, 6th February 2001, to discuss our possible approach providing our investigations show any breaches. Everyone is welcome to attend.



ADVANCE AUSTRALIA BARE

Australians all, come make a choice, our land is hurt by greed,
It's fragile soil and wealth dispoiled, for nature comes tax-free,
No more radiant gifts abound, with beauty rich and rare,
On the front page, we soon will gauge: last chance, Australia's bare.

Beneath the flag of profit and loss, our forests turn to sand,
The 'greenhouse" from our fossil fuels, is renowned throughout the lands,
We want our kids and their kids too, to breathe in good fresh air,
Not live with weeds and salt and sludge, "Bad luck, Australia's bare."

In mournful strains we may then shout:
"Why didn't you tell us the situation was so bad?
We would have done something about it!
But it's too late now!"

Linda Zibell

Greed Killing Our Forests

Tim Anderson

The Wombat Forest Society is calling in the Department of Natural Resources and Environment to radically change the method of sawlog grading and allocation in the Wombat Forest this year. The WFS have alerted NRE that the Wood Utilisation Plan (WUPs), released for the next three years, proposes to log coupes that the WFS believes are in breach of a number of State and Federal regulations. The Society has indicated that it intends to test the validity of the WUPs at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

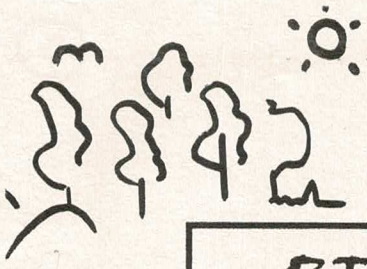
The main complaint the WFS have is the shear number of coupes that will be cut in the Wombat. Over the next three years NRE is intending to harvest around one seventh of the forest. The main reason that this area is required is to supply the volume of B-Grade logs. These are the best quality logs that our forests produce.

The Wombat Forest Society has argued for many years that the volume of B-Grade logs that is supplied to the industry is killing our forest. Each year more area of forest is cut than is sustainable. You cannot keep logging excessive areas of a finite forest and not have it simply run out. This is the primary reason that we have seen such significant cuts in the sustainable yield over the past four years. The independent audit by Profs. Turner (ANU) and Ferguson (Melbourne Uni.), called by Federal Minister for Forests and Conservation Hon. Wilson Tuckey, into the Midlands as part of the Regional Forest Agreement, states that "NRE staff points out that NRE has no legal requirement to supply defined quantities or proportions of B+ logs."

The WFS calls on NRE to abandon the practice of cutting up the logs to suit grade demands from some sawmills, that produces more waste wood and requires more and more area to be cut each year. This is why the timber industry in this region has no future past ten years in the region." Said Mr Anderson. "Black Forest Sawmill is and has been supplied with 50% of its quota as B-Grade sawlogs. Our forests cannot supply this volume and Black Forest has no legal reason for being supplied with such a huge volume of B-Grade logs. It is time for NRE to show that they are in control of the bush and not there just to fulfill the selfish whims of some sectors of the industry.

Sawlogs should be graded for 'best recovery' and not 'best grade', and the industry should be prepared to take their logs under the regime known as 'run of the bush' or what the forest produces. The current system is cutting up trees to fulfill grade demands that cannot be met, this is resulting in excessive areas being logged. This system is also producing the increased volumes of woodchips. It is time that the big players in the industry show the community that they are responsible users of our forests and abandon the practices that have ruined the Wombat. The big logs are supplied on the basis that they are destined for high grade value adding, yet there is no auditing system that ensures that these logs are put to this use, and not simply cut up for fencing and green structural use. It is 'judgement day for our forests' and all of the 'gentlemen's agreements' need to be abandoned, and all involved show that they are serious about the long term health of our forests and not the short term profits of the few, that only have their own interests at heart.

The Wombat Forest Society has had indications from NRE that it will be attempting to down-size the industry from 58 000m3 p.a. to 40 000m3 p.a. sawlog, that was an outcome of the RFA, this year instead of the 3 years allowed for. While the Wombat Forest Society see this as a positive step, unless the real problem (unsustainable B-Grade production) is tackled, then the same amount of area will be cut, and the Wombat will continue to be destroyed.



RECENT CAMPAIGNING

Wombat Forest Society members Tim and Loris Duclos (also Tambo Environment Awareness Group) and Gippsland apairist, Terry O'Kane took the opportunity to earbash six State Ministers when they met in Moe in mid December.

The delegation showed a number of Ministers including John Brumby and Rob Hulls, Marcia Thompson (Small Business) and Keith Hamilton over logging in most areas of the State during the 1990's, in the foyer of the Moe Town Hall. Following this formal meetings were arranged with Sherryl Garbutt (Natural Resources & Environment), Bruce Milderhall (Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier), Candy Broad (Energy), John Pandazopoulos (Tourism). The outcome was some high level followups to further explain the evidence that Loris has compiled showing excessive over harvesting in many areas throughout the State.

Unless this current State Government realises that the mismanagement of the State's forests over the past two decades, they will face a huge community, and ultimately electoral, backlash when this becomes apparent with the release of the current Statewide Forests Resource Inventories over the next five years. Currently, there are 20 DNRE staff working in the Wombat Forest on this project. The objective of this field inquiry is to collect data from the forest which, in conjunction with other information (such as elevation) can be used to estimate timber volumes for sustainable yield forecasting. Some other environmental information (fore example the presence of hollows, weeds, etc) is collected for use in other projects, outside of the SFRI. The local SFRI information will be used as an input to the Midlands FMA sustainable yield forescating process which is due to be completed in 2003.

Wombat Forest Society modelling has predicted that the sustainable yields for most forest management areas within the State is currently 20-30 % over to ensure a continuous log supply. This will impact heavily on forests and forest related industries as the Bracks Government will be going to the polls. The State Government must decide whether to come clean now or risk massive negative electoral problems in the future.

They must call an Inquiry into what is going on within the lofty towers of NRE. What is the agenda? Disband NRE by making it irrelevant as they have allowed all of the forests to be woodchipped.

WOODSYER FARM
SHEPHERDS FLAT



SEASONAL VEGETABLES & POULTRY

Also Wide Range of Decorative Gourds.....All Shapes & Sizes

And There's More....Books<Books>Books by Penny Woodward
*Asian Herbs And Vegetables *Australian Herbal
*Garlic And Friends *Pest-Repellant Plants

Contact Libby Woodward & Steve Syer on 5476-4332

OLD NEW HOME

In November, the local Powerhouse Art Space, home of the Wombat Forest Society office, closed up after four wonderful years of operation. The Powerhouse, ran by member Amanda Rowland & other WFS supporters, has provided a much needed office space for the Wombat Forest Society over the last eighteen months. More importantly, the Powerhouse provided our local community with a low-cost and accessible Art/Performance venue. Many of the Powerhouse exhibitions included strong environmental/social themes such as "The World That Ate Itself," "recycle", "Spring to Spring" and the highly successful, "Landscape To Land." Fortunately for the Wombat Forest Society, the new operators of the Powerhouse, Glenn Mack and Allan Wolf-Tasker, have kindly offered us a free office space after new renovations. Glenn and Allan, both successful artists, are founding members of Cockatoo Zoo, an innovative Arts Design Group with strong creative intergrity. The Wombat Forest Society is extremely appreciative of their generous support and wish them best for their new venture. Stay Tuned for more details.

Treasurers Report



The Wombat Forest Society finances continue to fluctuate between not much & not much at all. Fortunately, we have maintained a strong membership base and generous donations allowing us to keep operating our campaign. Our Regional Forest Agreement account has been fully audited and all spendings verified by the appropriate process. Also, our general operating fund account has been finalised in accordance to the Model Rules of the Associations Incorporations Acts (1981). Our fundraising efforts have been small and we need to increase our efforts, perhaps an annual event. Any ideas? I would like to thank our committee members, who have generously donated monies toward general operating costs without personal recourse. These contributions allow the Wombat Forest Society to provide extra local community support. Finally, I would like to thank my wonderful sister Donna, who has patiently provided valuable assistance with our finalised accounts and monitoring

Parliamentary Inquiry Needed

Tim Anderson

The Wombat Forest Society is calling on the Premier Hon. Steve Bracks to announce a full Parliamentary Inquiry into Department of Natural Resources and Environment's management of Victorian Forests including the Wombat.
The WFS believes that there is now sufficient evidence to show that NRE has allowed unsustainable logging in many of Victoria's forests. Beside the unsustainable logging huge volumes of usable timber is being woodchipped despite interest from some sectors of the timber industry, who wished to create jobs and value adding in Victoria and not Japan, from the low-grade logs.
We have seen a succession of State Ministers for Forests and Conservation unable or unwilling to bring this department into check. With the current Statewide review of sustainable yields rolling across the State, the forest issue could well make or break the Bracks Government, with its impacts in rural Victoria." Wombat Forest Society analysis shows that most Forest Management Areas are being logged at 25-30% over sustainable. Further analysis has revealed that during the Kennett Government reign there was a significant rise in the proportion of big logs from most areas and a corresponding rise in woodchips. This indicates that the best forest areas in each region where allowed to be cut out over the past decade.
Within this region we have seen the sawlog quota reduced to nearly half of what it was originally set at, with further major reductions predicted in two years time. We are seeing significant job losses in the bush and in the sawmills. With the number of State Parliamentary Seats that the Bracks Government picked up in this region, and other forest centered seats around the State swinging to the ALP or Independents, the issue of forests may well make or break this Government.
The ex Director of Forest Services and currently in the Department's Secretary Office, Mr Richard Rawson has stood in the Daylesford Town Hall within the past 5 years as well as producing a number of media releases, that has told our community that there would be no reductions in quota and that they where managing the forests properly and that the Wombat Forest Society had no idea what it was talking about.
Since then we have seen huge reductions in quotas, the Wombat Forest almost cut out and massive job loses. The Wombat Forest Society is calling on Richard Rawson to hold a public meeting in Daylesford early next year and be accountable for his words. If he has not got the guts to do this then the Minister Mrs Garbutt should order him to do it, if he will still not hold the meeting then he should be sacked immediately.
The WFS acknowledges that there are some really good people within NRE, but there are also some whose actions make it hard to see why the Bracks Government has retained them. Sawmills in this region where asked to consider exit packages as part of the RFA, in order to reduce the sustainable yield to the temporary level set by the RFA. WFS information suggests that four mills put up their hands for packages that would have reduced the level to well under the identified levels and take some of the pressure of the bush. NRE staff in their arrogance have knocked back some of these requests.
What is the agenda? Does NRE want to cut out the Wombat as quick as they can? Do they want the community so angry at the ongoing destruction of the Wombat that we say 'enoughs enough? Why is it that despite quotas being cut to nearly half, are we seeing record levels of area being logged this summer? Our analysis suggests that in order to supply the reduced levels over the past 5

years, almost 25% of the Wombat has been logged. Who in NRE can say that this is anything but a disgrace?
Recently, I called into a local sawmill in Daylesford and shown massive numbers of perfectly good sawlogs supplied to them as E-grade or residual logs. The sawmiller was appalled that at a time of reductions and job losses, that the resource was being wasted. In the timber yard, there were pulp logs that had since been regraded as B and C grade logs and tree butts 30 inches through and 3 to 4 meters long. Supplied as residual. This is absolutely criminal, and while it may suit some mills not to get the buttressed bottom end of a tree, that is their problem, you don't cut it off and send it in to another mill as waste wood.
The Wombat Forest Society suggest that we can see a statewide trend that suggests that NRE are favoring certain sawmills and blanket woodchipping over the future health of our forests, the future of smaller mills and the ignoring of non-timber values which have often a greater economic value than the timber. Where the exit packages in this region knocked back, as NRE needs to maintain the façade of supplying logs to lots of mills, in order to fulfill their unsustainable B-grade sawlog commitments to their favored mill as well as the massive woodchip volumes. There are too many instances of NRE misleading our community or backing what turns out to be wrong management advice or volume levels. This is destroying our region's forests and causing stress in the community approaching Christmas. The Premier and the Minister for Conservation and Environment Mrs Garbutt must take the hard political road and order a full Parliamentary Inquiry into NRE's performance over the past decade. A failure to do this may see the ALP Government rejected by rural Victoria.

EAST GIPPSLAND SUMMER 2001

This summer a big campaign is planned to protect the ancient forests of this region. From the cities to the forests, we hope to bring the message home to industry and government that the public will not stand by and do nothing as the last of these precious forests are fed to the woodchippers. A number of groups will be involved, in public information will be involved, in public information activities, government lobbying, corporate campaigning and non-voilent direct action.
Come to East Gippsland to join in this summer or get active with the city-based campaign groups.

To Get Involved Contact

Goonergerah Environment Centre - (03) 5154-0156
Concerned Residents Of East Gippsalnd - (03) 5154-0145
Friends Of The Earth Network - (03) 9419-8700
The Wilderness Society, Melbourne - (03) 9639-5455
Future Rescue - 9663 0500/0428 882 802

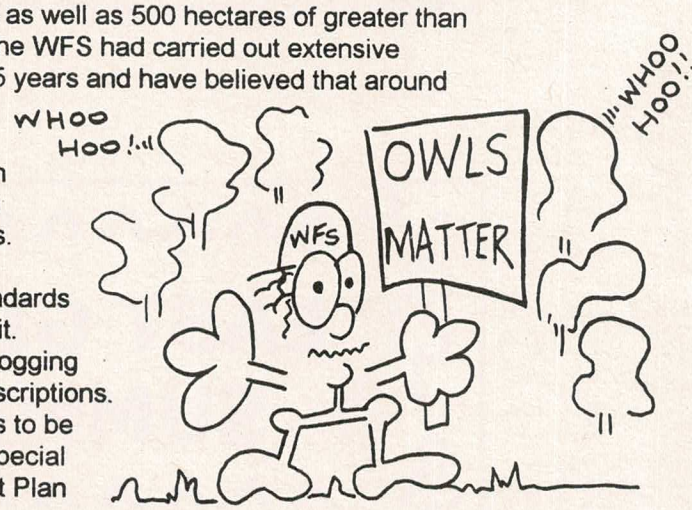
BULLARTO ACTION

WOMBAT FOREST SOCIETY FORCED INTO DIRECT ACTION

In November ,the Wombat Forest Society was forced to hold its first forest based 'Direct Action' over logging in the Bullarto Powerful Owl management zone. The Wombat Forest Society believed that the proposed coupe in the Bullarto section of the Wombat State Forest would severely compromise the Department of Natural Resources and Environment's own requirements for Powerful Owls in the Midland Forest Management Area.

In May, DNRE had pulled out the logging crew from this coupe when the Wombat Forest Society first raised concerns. At a meeting in early June with NRE officers and Joanne Duncan, Member for Gisborne, it was clear that NRE still did not have conclusive data to justify further logging in the Leitches Creek Powerful Owl Zone. DNRE provided an undertaking at the meeting to resolve this issue over the winter months, working with the Wombat Forest Society to avoid any possible direct action.

The Midlands FMA management plan requires that NRE must maintain at least 500 hectare of forest to be reserved in a Special Protection Zone as well as 500 hectares of greater than 30 years of age in the Special Management Zone. The WFS had carried out extensive analysis of the areas logging history over the past 25 years and have believed that around 80% of the zone have been logged.



Ultimately, the WFS rejected NRE's new modification of the prescriptions that allow areas that have a 50% mature canopy cover as contributing to the owl areas. The WFS believes that this is an arbitrary decision without technical backup. If this lessening of the standards is based on scientific research, then we want to see it. The community is constantly told that we must view logging as being carried out under a set of management prescriptions. These same prescriptions clearly state that there has to be 500 hectares of 30 year old or greater forest in the special management zone. The Midland Forest Management Plan makes no mention of possible variations.

We got word in November that a logging crew had been told by NRE that we were satisfied with the owl provisions and the logging could commence. The WFS immediately informed NRE and the logging crew that any attempt to start logging would see direct action. The contractors agreed to take the Monday off believing that NRE would be able sit down with WFS and other community members and resolve the issue. So did we.

WE sent a delegation out to the coupe while others sat in NRE office in Daylesford and attempted to determine who was right or wrong. NRE was unable to produce even the most basic records of what had been logged in the owl zone. Wombat Forest Society members frustrated at the impasse, phoned NRE heads in Melbourne. We where promised that on the Tuesday that personnel and data would be available.

The next day saw around 50 people in the coupe ready to prevent harvesting while another delegation trudged into Daylesford. In the bush the protestors and the loggers came to an agreement that the logs that had been felled prior to winter could be removed but no trees could be felled. In the office we where again presented with sub standard data. By this time

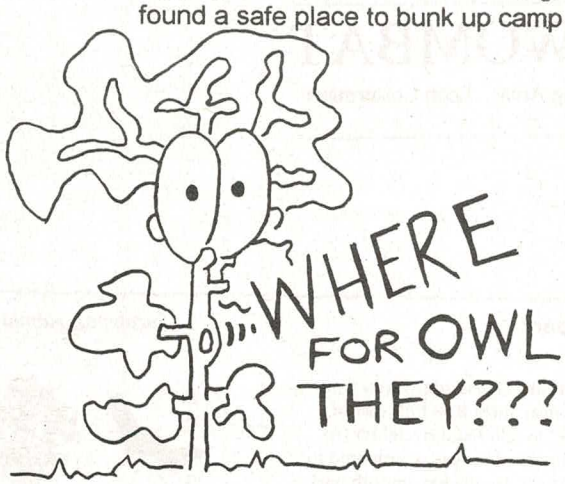
the Gary McIntosh and Stuart Lee, two horseman, had surveyed the entire area and we had a pretty good idea that NRE was in the wrong.

The Wombat Forest Society attempted to have the issue resolved on Monday, but DNRE needed more time to assemble the information needed to clarify the situation. When this failed the WFS has asked for logging due to commence to be postponed.

While Tim Anderson and Garry McIntosh worked with local DNRE in Daylesford, thirty members & supporters of the Wombat Forest went to the logging coupe to monitor the operations. Fortunately, the logging crew had decided to forgo a day's work to enable this issue to be resolved. The same logging crew had been pulled out in May and DNRE were willing to send them back as 'lame ducks' knowing that the Wombat Forest concerns had not been addressed. Highly provocative!

The decision to send the loggers back into the coupe on Osbourne's Road Leitches Creek before outstanding concerns of over logging in the coupe had the WFS and supporters on the brink of directly intervening to halt logging. Despite our concerns and willingness to work through the logging history, DNRE continually backed their analysis that had shown that they could log another 290 hectares and still meet their requirements under the RFA and the Midlands Forest Area Management Plan.

The Wombat Forest Society along with other residents of the area carried out extensive on ground surveys and logging history reviews over winter and could not find the implied areas. This placed the loggers and the community in the position of imminent confrontation. On Tuesday, whilst Tim Anderson and Garry McIntosh reviewed maps and logging histories in the DNRE Daylesford, 60 WFS members and supporters gathered at the Bullarto coupe to halt any further logging operations. The WFS had earlier reached agreement with the logging crew that we would allow them to take the timber felled in May but would attempt to halt logging from any further harvesting. Working with local police & logging contractors, we found a safe place to bunk up camp and monitor the logging operations.



By the time the re-analysis was complete the 290-hectare buffer NRE had was reduced to 57 hectares, with some questions still unanswered. During a conference at the coupe over the new figures, the logging crew explained that they would see civil charges laid on anyone that disrupted logging. Earlier, local DNRE staff had taken the license numbers of all cars within the logging area.

The protesters explained that they would welcome the opportunity to argue the issue of area as their defence in court with the accompanying media, represented by the top legal representation that had been offered to the Wombat Forest Society. Seeking compromise, the logging protestors come to an agreement with the logging crew that any further logging would compensated elsewhere in the Powerful Owl Management Area if the Wombat Forest Society analysis was correct.

The Wombat Forest Society decided to That night, local horseriders Garry McIntosh and Stuart Lee did a ground reconnaissance of the disputed areas to back up WFS argument. The logging coupe protestors made a decision to take our protest to the Daylesford DNRE office the following day.

Early, Wednesday morning, Dave Stephens set up his imposing teepee outside Daylesford DNRE & immediately declared the Wombat Forest Embassy open. While the rain pelted, Tim Anderson & Garry McIntosh continued to negotiate a possible outcome with new data provided by ground surveys and updated DNRE maps. In keeping with our community inclusive approach, Tim arranged that members of the outside protest be allowed to rotate at

the inside meeting in a observation role. Outside, the kettle boiled, banners suspended and cold endured. Local community continued to support our protest action with many people visiting during the day.

In side the community and the owl where asked to accept another change in interpretation. Melbourne generated SFRI data now showed that NRE's original assertion that they could still log another 290 hectares had shrunk to 87 hectares. The WFS and community could not at that stage verify this new information so a discussio in the teepee between NRE and those present agreed that they could not stop this coupe being logged but a total moratorium on any more logging in the owl zone for ten years was agreed to by NRE.

Bythe end of that day NRE where trying to back out. They had realised that under the influence of the teepee they had given more than they had intended.

This prompted anger from us and we resolved to finish our surveying of the area. This saw the 87 hectares NRE had thought they had fall to a deficit. They had logged 13 hectares into the 500 hectare SMZ provision. The WFS informed NRE that we intended legal action.

This saw the unprecedented decision by NRE to immediately pull out the loggers. Needless to saw they where not impressed. The contractors believed that they had been set up for a clash with the community and for Pritchards Logging this was the final straw. They put in for a RFA exit package and are now totally out of the industry.

NRE still won't satisfactorily admit they stuffed up. Instead saying they will send it to the reference group when it is formed.

From our point of view we are going to take legal action. We are going to put in a complaint to the Commonwealth for a breach of NRE's 'Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management' requirements. Gary McIntosh has also found some appalling breaches of the code of forest practices on Babbington Hill. These will see more legal action.

TREES OF THE WOMBAT

Trees Of Victoria And Adjoining Areas...Leon Costermans

The Eucalypts

Swamp Gum

Eucalyptus ovata [A]

[A] **Swamp Gum** (*E. ovata*) is the most common and widespread member of the swamp gum group. A small to medium-sized tree, usually with an open crown of sparse foliage at the ends of long smooth branches. On *poorly drained sites*, mostly on flats and dips in hills *south* of Main Divide, usually associated with stringy-bark–peppermint–gum formations.

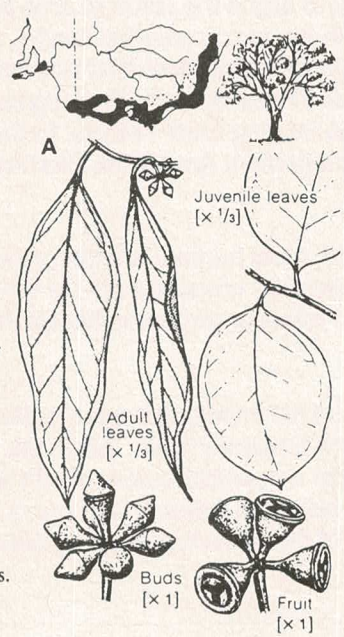
BARK: Dark and rough at base of trunk; shed in ribbons from upper trunk and branches leaving a cream-grey surface.

LEAVES: Adult—Thick, dark green, sub-glossy, *usually broad (ovate) with wavy edges*, but sometimes longer and narrower (lanceolate). New growth brighter green.

Juvenile—Dull green, ± rounded, stalked and alternate.

BUDS: About 7 per cluster; cap usually conical giving the bud a *diamond shape*. Flowers mainly May–September.

FRUIT: *Funnel-shaped and flat-topped* (6–8 mm wide, but larger in populations near Vic–SA border); 3–4 *horizontal* valves.



Candlebark

Eucalyptus rubida [A]

[A] **Candlebark** (*E. rubida*) varies from small (e.g. near Yarra R in hills east of Melbourne) to taller and straighter (to 35 m) in forests of ranges. Compared to Manna Gum, it usually has smooth bark on most of the trunk, lacks ribbons, occurs on generally drier shallower soils, and has rounded grey juvenile leaves.

BARK: *Smooth, white almost to ground*, but tends to develop reddish patches before peeling in summer (hence '*rubida*').

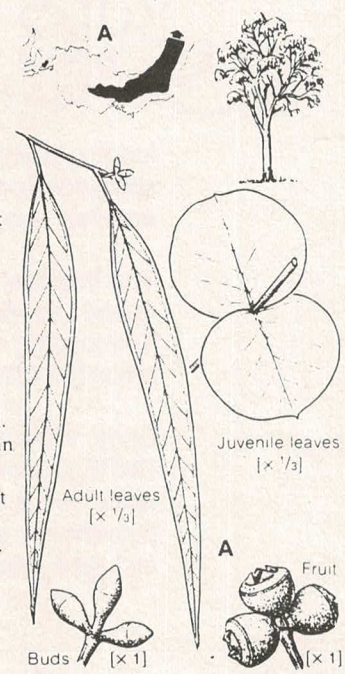
LEAVES: Adult—Narrow, green or grey-green, 10–20 cm long.

Juvenile— Generally ± *rounded, grey* (glaucous), opposite and stalkless.

BUDS: *In 3s* in widespread subsp. *rubida*, green (sometimes glaucous), caps conical. In 7s in subsp. *septemflora* of mountains in NE Vic. Flowers summer.

FRUIT: Mostly in 3s, like Manna Gum but often slightly smaller (5–7 mm diam.); disc broad, domed; 3–4 projecting valves.

WOOD: Tough but not durable, of little economic value. Superior in [B] below.



WOMBAT FOREST EDUCATION PROJECT

Maryanne Faulks

The Wombat Forest Society is in the process of creating a community education program about the Wombat Forest. The purpose if the program is to provide an opportunity for all people living and working in and around the Wombat Forest to gain deeper insights into the unique workings of their wild place. Various attempts have been made over the years to record changes in and around the Wombat Forest, but this has never been done in an inclusive approach.
The Wombat Forest Society is proposing a 2-tier investigation.
Firstly, we need to access all exisiting documentation pertaining to the flora, fauna and hydrology of the local area. Hopefully, this way can provide a basic picture of the original state of the Wombat Forest. We would like to map any changes that have taken place.
Secondly, no comprehensive field survey has been conducted on the Wombqat Forest for at least two decades. We have an enormous resource of local people who "know their patch." Also, we have local schools and other educational facilities whose environmental education would be well served by participation in this project
Any data collected in the Wombat Forest survey would be used to make a current information resource and underpin the development of our proposed Wombat Forest Field Guide.
The Wombat Forest Society would
like to run workshops for the general community at thhe Neighbourhood House which would include
* basic plant and animal identification
* a Wombat Forest history
* how to monitor water quality
* field trips
* regeneration

If you are interested in participating on local workshops, being part of the field survey, offer expetise in helping to compile information we would like to hear from you. Are you a member of a local historical group? Do you have any diaries handed down through the family which have records of plants and animals in the Wombat Forest? Do you have any old photos?

Forest Elegy

wake up wake up your forests are dying

and the quick life pulse

and the vivid eye

are fading fast faster than you think

the brush of feather on fern

the glance, the silent paw

lost to life

and the quiet love of it all

pushed away and smashed.

grief

sing now friend of forest

'let the green leaf, be'

8/9/00
Linda Zibell

PLANTATIONS< PLANTATIONS >PLANTATIONS

The *Great Plantation Debate* continues to rage amongst forest activists, encompassing a wide range of philosphical viewpoints. Due to recent developments and environmental understandings, the Wombat Forest Society has supported a growing shift toward restoration/reforestation options. In recognition of this important debate, we invited Anthony Amis, Friends Of The Earth Forest Campaigner, to address our members at our recent AGM (August 2000) about his ongoing work regarding plantations. Recently, Anthony has sought to provide a common campaign position for plantations throughout Victoria. The Wombat Forest Society committee believe that this an ideal beginning for our group to define its plantation policy. We will make this the focus of our March committee/community meeting. Anthony's suggestions are listed below for membership consideration and further information can be found in the Friends Of The Earth "GoodWood Guide". The Wombat Forest Society has a copy for borrowing and other information, available to all members. Also, the National Forest Summit will be providing a huge focus on plantation issues. Anyway, have a look and provide us with any feedback.

Plantations: Points of possible common ground

1. No conversion of native forest/grasslands/high quality agricultural land to plantations.
2. All new 'plantations' to be mixed species and follow as closely as possible the indigenous species of that particular region - including understorey species. (ie restoration forestry).
3. Retirement of plantation lands too sensitive to log, after first rotation. eg steep slopes/sensitive soil types. Land to be converted back to indigenous vegetation and retired from timber production.(regional prescriptions are vital)
4. Restoration of plantation areas to native forest. This would be gradual. But a good place to start is restoration of streamsides, springs and drainage lines after one rotation. This would allow plantations to go into second/third rotations, but we would get an incremental gain in native forest cover. (Many plantations have been established with scant regard to protection of waterways).
5. Restoration of wildlife corridors within plantation areas.
6. Retirement of plantations after one rotation if located in domestic water supply catchments to be replaced with indigenous species based on restoration forestry principles. (100 towns in Victoria alone rely on water sourced from Hancock plantations).
7. No use of herbicides in plantations - this is especially the case when plantations are located upstream of domestic water supply areas.
8. Minimal use of fertilisers.
9. No Genetically modified trees in plantations.
10. Promote mixed species agroforestry. Especially in regard to fast growing alternatives to firewood. Eg In many areas a suitable plantation crop of firewood could be harvested quite quickly.
11. Support mixed species agroforestry initiatives.
12. Pressure CMA's/CSIRO and plantation companies to conduct hydrological research into the impact of plantations on water quality and quantity.
13. Plantation companies/CMA's to establish downstream monitoring of plantation harvesting and impacts on macroinvertebrate and fish populations. (especially in regard to Trout Cod, Macquarie Perch, Ewen's Pygmy Perch, Murray Cod). This would also relate to impacts of herbicides/insectides and fungicides such as Copper Oxychloride.
14. Plantation timber to be put to its highest end use. (Eg Many of the plantations in Victoria were established to supply chip board and particle board. This seems to be a waste).
15. Get private forestry standards in the Code of Forest Practices up to the standards of public forests. (They were initially watered down at Amcor's insistence)
16. Pressure state government to buy back Victoria's plantation base from Hancock. (Fat chance - but I thought I'd throw that one in).
17. End the tax incentives which give plantation companies such as Timbercorp a 150% tax break for the establishment of bluegum plantations.done this).
18. Find a suitable replacement to Copper Chrome Arsenate and establish a database on CCA treatment plants and their effect on the environment.
19. Plantations are planned within the hydrological context of surface and ground water

Babbington Hill

Gary McIntosh

DNRE breaches have become apparent on Babbington Hill in the Wombat Forest. Babbington Hill is immediately east of and adjacent to the Bullarto Powerful Owl Zone. The hill can be seen to the north of Lyonville from the Daylesford/Trentham Road.

The western face of Babbington Hill is a Special Management Zone for the Bullarto Reservoir which is one of Daylesford's main town water supplies. Spring fed gullies in this zone are for obvious reasons protected from harvesting. DNRE however authorised a spring within 800M of the actual reservoir to be logged and scalped bare on the steep slopes of Babbington Hill in this very Special Management Zone in total breach of their own guidelines!

And it still doesn't stop there! Babbington Hill is highly viewable from the Daylesford/Trentham Road which is one of the few "Designated High Sensitivity Tourist Routes." DNRE guidelines state that this area should be harvested so that alterations are only subtly apparent within two years of harvesting. Furthermore, logging coupes should be timed to minimise visual
impact. DNRE plan to log the southern face of Babbington Hill (which is the closest and most obvious in view of the road) shortly. If DNRE were to follow their own guidelines to minimise visual impact, no more logging would take place until the other virtually clearfelled slopes have regenerated and are at least 10 years old. As regeneration efforts on Babbington Hill have failed in many areas it could be 15 years or so (not this year!) before further logging should take place so as to maintain some amenity and minimise the visual impact.

This may well be the next stand that the Wombat Forest Society and its members are forced to take. To save Babbington Hill from becoming an even bigger eyesore. The logs will still be there for industry in 15 years, and a lot bigger too. Surely this is what sustainable forest management is meant to be about. Considering ALL forest values.

and finally.....

The Wombat Forest Society will be running a couple of community spaces in each newsletter for members with environmentally friendly businesses to advertise (free of charge) or for other local campaign information. Please call or send into our office at the Powerhouse Art Space with any such details.

Newsletter Editor: Peter O'Mara
Cover Image: Marina Neilson
Contributors: Tim Anderson, Maryanne Faulks, Gary McIntosh,
Peter O'Mara, Anthony Amis, Linda Zibell
Next Newsletter Will Be Published in September 2001

STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS

The WFS has just received the 2001-2004 Wood Utilisation Plans for the Midlands. The WUPs show that due to mill closures that have happened and are about to happen, the sawlog volumes have been reduced down to 39 800 m3 this year instead of the 3 years that the RFA had allowed. The WUPs also show that the woodchip volumes have dropped down to 45 000 tons next year. If we consider that 3 years ago the sawlog volume was 72 000m3 pa and the woodchipping was running at around 90 000 tons with a peak of 110 000tons in the mid 1990's. To now have volumes down to 40 000 sawlog and 45 000tons woodchip is a testament to the effectiveness of the Wombat Forest Society's campaigning, but obviously still too high. The down side is the area that is projected to be logged. The RFA has reduced the net productive area of the Midlands from 50 400 hectares down to 38 000 hectares. NRE intends to allow 3741 hectares to be logged. Around 10% of the whole forest area in ONE YEAR. The 3 year projections will see 30% of the forests logged. This is clearly unsustainable and will see the whole of the Wombat cut out in less that 10 years from now. The NRE model needs to get an average of 47m3 per hectare average to meet its predictions. The current wups show an average yield of only 13 m3 ha. A quarter of what they need to achieve. Clearly the timber industry is doomed. More importantly our precious Wombat Forest and all of its other values will also be ruined. I do not believe that the Wombat Forest Society, the local Shires, the State Government, the timber industry, the union and the broader community can let this happen.

We need a full Parliamentary Inquiry. In the short term the ex-Director of Forest Services Richard Rawson (now in departmental secretaries office) should be sacked. It was Mr Rawson that has told us and the community in the 1990's that we where wrong, it was Rawson that presided over the destruction of our forests in the 1990's.

Tim Anderson

DAYLESFORD SAWMILL CLOSES

As a result of the West Victorian RFA, Daylesford Sawmill closed its doors just before Xmas. This saw the loss of around 50 jobs. Members of the WFS were asked to have a number of meetings with the owners and staff of the mill prior to its closure to discuss the possibility of having all the loads of pulp wood, that are currently going to Geelong to be woodchipped, be sent to the Daylesford Mill to be sorted & where possible, processed as local sawlog timbers rather than sent off to prop up overseas markets. The Barkers (owners) believed that they could achieve significant recovery from the pulp logs to be kiln dried for laminated beams and others section for pallet timber. Trials that the Barkers ran saw them getting usable lengths of logs from 90% of the logs sent to them. In the end the massive sawlog volume reductions with more to come meant that the scale of the mill was unviable. It seems that the Barkers and their investors had believed NRE's 1996 projections that the sawlog yield for the region would be 58 000m3 p.a. for the next 120 years. They had invested in value-adding equipment based on these numbers. The RFA exposed error in NRE's projections and the corresponding reduction to 40 000m3 (a temporary figure) saw the mill become unviable.It was agreed that the real culprit in the destruction of the Wombat, nother sawmill, appeared to be untouched and that this was immoral.I had a tour of the mills log yard and had one of the Barkers show me that most of the logs that they had in their yard where E-grade or waste logs, yet when the sawlog grading card was applied to them they where in fact D, C and even B-grade logs. Allan Barker believed that this was criminal and was one of the reasons the bush was stuffed. He explained that whenever he complained to the department about sawlogs coming in as waste, NRE usually came out measured the logs and gave the mill a Bill for the logs, recharged at sawlog rates. Wombat Forest Society also addressed the 50 mill workers, at their request, one morning and gave the Society's projections on the future of the forecasts and the timber industry. We were pleased to hear that the workers in fact were well informed as to the problems the region's forests faced. The WFS pledged support for the workers for adequate redundancy and re-training packages. Many of the employees at the mill are also WFS members. In the media that surrounded the closure, local mill worker worker Dale Callahan commented that he did not blame the environmentalists but NRE for the job losses. The WFS hopes that all the ex-employees find satisfactory jobs in the future and wishes them all well.

UPDATEUPDATE UPDATEUPDATEUPDATEUPDATEUPDATEUPADTEUPDATE

THE LATEST RAVE

TRENTHAM ACTION

The Wombat Forest Society has joined with the Cobaw And Wombat Forest Action Group to collectively support the Powerful Owl campaign of local group Actively Conserving Trentham. After a sustained and somewhat frustrating localised campaign, Actively Conserving Trentham have been left with no alternative but direct action in it's endeavour to establish a Powerful Owl Mangement Area (POMA) for the well documented breeding pair in the area. Under the Midlands Forest Management, DNRE is obliged to proivde protection for 25 Powerful Owl pairings, including 14 within the Wombat Forest. Supposedly, these are based on the best possible records, but DNRE has clearly breached these guidelines & continue to ignore ACT's claims for a POMA. Convieniently, they have just located a 25th pairing near Avoca with inferior records to the Trentham Owl, but without conflict of logging interests. Go Figure!! It must be remembered that the 25 owl pairings is a minimal target. The Wombat Forest Society believe the actions of DNRE to be morally corrupt. Already, we have seen a shutdown of the Daylesford NRE offices by protestors with local Trentham grandmothers chained to the office doors. An ongoing campaign including direct forest action is planned with strong local participation. All protest will be of a non-voilent nature. DNRE are awaiting for ministerial approval to begin logging the Donimo Road coupe in the heart of the Powerful Owl breeding/living zone. I will be co-ordinating any Wombat Forest Society involvement in conjunction with CAWFAG & ACT & if you want to be included in the phone tree, please call me on 5348-1154. Be ready!!!!!

WFS CAMPOUT 2001

The Wombat Forest Society CampOut 2001 at Nolans Crossing was a huge success with 75 people, including 40 children, attending over the weekend. CampOut 2001 was organised as a component of the Wombat Forest Society's ongoing campaign to increase public awareness through local particpation & bringing fun back into the forest. Highlights included a discussion/display from local wildlife illustrator, RobMacini, a wonderful talk by Powerful Owl enthusiasts, Wendy Bone & Sandy Schletema and a spotlighting expedition with local naturalists, Monty Kirby and Greg Morgan. Also, there was spontaneous cricket matches, creek expolration, singalongs, bicycle riding, card games & the odd afternoon powernap. Our WFS camps will continue with another possibly scheduled for April and a definite committment toward September/October. Thanks to everyone who particpated, especially our invited speakers & kids. The Wombat Forest belongs to us all.

Peter O'Mara

Wombat Forest Society Inc.

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