



# ***Coastwatchers***

***Eurobodalla's environment group***

Newsletter 20 July 2017

## **Farewell to Maureen and Jim Baker**

The Association has farewelled two of its greatest supporters and environmental warriors, with the departure of Maureen and Jim Baker in early July, moving closer to Sydney to be nearer to their family.

Maureen and Jim have been members of the Coastwatchers Association for over 25 years, and both have given unflinching support and service to the Association. Maureen was a Committee member for four years from 1994-95 to 1997-98.



Maureen and Jim at a recent farewell

Maureen was a member of the Coastwatchers Environment Fund Committee for over a decade, and her sound advice and critical approach will be missed.

Jim and Maureen were not only involved with the Coastwatchers Association, but founded the highly successful Tuross Lakes Preservation Group in the early 1990s. The Group

became one of the inaugural 'Landcare' groups to operate in the Eurobodalla Shire.

Maureen and Jim were also involved with Shire wide Estuary Management Committees as well as with NPWS Committees. Maureen served on the Eurobodalla Shire's Coastal Management Advisory Committee.

In between all these activities, Maureen completed an environmental degree in her retirement.

For over 25 years Jim and Maureen have campaigned strongly to protect community and environmental issues, dedicating thousands of hours of voluntary time towards advocacy and on-ground environmental works.

Maureen received an Order of Australia Medal for her volunteer efforts and her dedicated commitment to the environment.

The Association thanks Maureen and Jim for their enormous voluntary contribution to environmental issues in the South Coast region, and wishes them every success in their second attempt at retirement.

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# Obituary

## Martyn Phillips

1947-2017



In May this year I notified Coastwatchers members of the death of Martyn Phillips, a long serving member of the Association and an extremely capable past President. Martyn died after losing his second battle with cancer.

Martyn had a critical role in the management of the Association over a 16 year period, and the Association acknowledges that enormous voluntary contribution with extreme gratitude.

He joined the Management Committee in 1991-92, and with his obvious leadership skills, became Vice President the next year. He continued in that role until 1994-95 when he became the Association's President for 2 years. He stepped back for a year before becoming President again in 1997-98. Martin stepped up again for the Presidency in 2004-05, and remained on the Management Committee until 2008.

Before moving to the Deua Valley, Martyn had served in the Royal Australian Air Force. He joined in 1970, and this job took he and Jan to Darwin where Kate was born. Later in the 1970's

they were posted to Malaysia where Amy was born. After various postings in Australia, he was seconded to the United States Air Force for three years in the early 1980s.

Around this time, in his mid 30's Martyn became seriously ill for the first time. He was diagnosed with metastatic melanoma cancer, which spread to other parts of his body. He fought this aggressively, taking every treatment offered, including the removal of most of his right lung.

In 1985 Martyn retired from the Air Force and with his family moved to their property in the Deua Valley, which he and Jan had bought 15 years earlier. The move and change in lifestyle did wonders, and he was cured of his cancer.

He became a member of the Coastwatchers Association as he appreciated deeply the special environmental qualities of the region. He volunteered many hours and much expertise to keeping the environment the way it was for future generations.

He was particularly involved in the protection of Deua Old Growth Forests from logging, having areas removed and transferred from NSW Forestry's control to the Deua National Park. His work on the extension of National Parks in southern NSW was publically acknowledged by the NSW Government in 2000.

Martyn has been described in correspondence to me by members "as a lovely bloke", "a good man", "a very fine man". He was a gentleman.

On behalf of the Association I pass on my deepest condolences to Jan and Martyn's two daughters, Kate and Amy.

**John Perkins**  
**President**  
**The Coastwatchers Association**

## Forest Logging Debate Erupts in Eurobodalla

For many years there have been many environmental battles to reduce or halt the logging of State Forests on the South Coast of NSW. They have never ended. The campaigns have been run by dedicated members of the community particularly further south in the Bega Shire, and both ends of Eurobodalla, where the logging has been more concentrated. The conflicts have now moved into the Mogo region.

**The Coastwatchers Association has stepped up to organise a Forest Forum meeting later in August in Moruya, to allow members, and the community, to voice their concerns.**

NSW Forestry has been increasing logging intensity around Batemans Bay and recently commenced logging in the Mogo State Forest on the eastern side of the Princes Highway.



Mogo State Forest

Suitable timber is becoming scarcer and scarcer, and the voracious greed for timber is never ending. One of the saddest aspects of the forest demolition, is that one day, suitable timber will simply run out, as the current logging practices and management are unsustainable. When that happens the

pressure from loggers will not cease, they will simply shift their demands to **log NSW National Parks.**

The maintenance of successful sustainable logging depends on the rate of regeneration of the forests after logging, particularly of the required species. Get these calculations wrong, and the management of the State owned forests becomes a disaster. And that is what has happened in the southern forests, with the timber required for the wood chip mill at Eden. NSW Forestry totally underestimated regeneration rates, in some cases by well over 100%.

The result is that more and more forests will be logged to meet the demand, until eventually the timber resource collapses. With the highly efficient modern logging machinery and the equally efficient milling equipment, the volumes of timber to meet the loggers demands to achieve financial break-even point, end up exceeding the forest's capacity to sustainably regrow.

(See Professor David Lindenmeyer's article in the Coastwatcher's Newsletter on 8 February 2017, entitled **"Things Fall Apart: Why do the Ecosystems we Depend on Collapse?"**)

As reported in an earlier Coastwatchers Newsletter, Koalas are near extinct in NSW, and some were recently found in the Bega Valley Shire, in the Bermagui-Murrah, Mumbulla and Tanja regions. The population was well documented, with the number of known koalas being between 50 and 60.

As a result logging plans for the area were halted, and the three State Forests, the Murrah, Mumbulla and Tanja, together with the southern half of Bermagui State Forest, were reclassified by the NSW Government in early 2016, as the **Murrah Flora Reserve.**

The naming of the area as a Flora Reserve, and not a National Park, was not an accident. It was a deliberate

strategy, so that if the Koalas die out, the 'Flora Reserve' can be reclassified in a pen stroke to 'Forest', and all the timber logged.

While that creation of the Flora Reserve was welcomed by the environmental movement to save the near extinct Koalas, the loggers still demanded their timber. And that is why the harvest pressure was transferred to the Batemans Bay and Mogo State Forests. And as a sweetener to the transport sector, the NSW Government offered "additional" transport subsidies (\$2.5 million) to cover the additional transport costs.

What other sectors in NSW gets such protection when costs increase. It appears the loggers live in a sheltered workshop, with no pressure from market forces.

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## **Concerned Community Members Find Endangered Greater Gliders, and Vulnerable Yellow-bellied Gliders in the Mogo State Forest**

Since the logging operation commenced, volunteer members of the community have been surveying the Mogo Forest, searching for fauna that would be adversely affected by the logging activities. They were also noting the presence of habitat and feed trees.

The volunteers included members of Coastwatchers, Wires, and the National Parks Association of NSW.

They found the presence of the Greater Glider (*Petauroides volans*) - Endangered in NSW, and the Yellow-bellied Glider (*Petaurus australis*) - Vulnerable in NSW, in the Mogo State Forest, in the area

being logged.

They also found wombat burrows. It is critical that logging contractors are aware of the presence of wombats and their burrows to avoid heavy machinery crushing the animals.

The Yellow-bellied glider feeds off the sap of specific trees and a Yellow-bellied Glider family requires a minimum feeding range of about 50 ha. Feed trees where found and the unique screech of this species was heard during the survey of the Mogo Forest.



By contrast Greater Gliders, two of which were spotted, are leaf eating nocturnal forest dwelling animals. Professor Lindenmayer describes Greater Gliders as flying koalas. The Greater Glider feeds exclusively on eucalypt leaves and buds and they occupy a relatively small home range of 1-3 ha. When disturbed by logging they rarely disperse to safety, and die in the remnants of their home range.

Both these gliding possum species are dependent on hollow trees, as the hollows provide the protection for their very survival. Without tree hollows they die. Tree hollows suitable for their survival generally only occur in trees more than a 100 years old, and these exist in the Mogo Forest.

Unfortunately, one of the characteristics of logged forests, is the complete absence of the large old trees with multiple tree hollows.

**In blunt terms this means when the Forestry Corporation logs an area, they destroy the old habitat trees driving the Greater Glider and Yellow-bellied Glider to extinction.**

So not only is NSW Forestry over logging, they are also converting the remaining forests into defacto plantations. Professor Lindenmayer describes the process as 'Stand Simplification'.



Greater Glider

The Forestry Corporation is required to undertake a pre logging survey of fauna and other matters.

In the case of the Mogo Forest, they undertook a "Claytons" Pre Logging Survey to detect the presence of threatened species. The survey of 400 ha, was limited to a total of 18 hours because of budget constraints. In

addition, because of Occupational Health and Safety Requirements, Forestry staff were not permitted to enter the deeper parts of the forest for nocturnal surveillance, the very time and place where these animals live. This makes a complete mockery of Forestry administration and procedures.

Coastwatchers understands that to cut costs further within the Forestry Corporation, it has been proposed that these pre-logging surveys be discontinued totally.

In addition to the detection of the gliders, the Mogo State Forest provides the habitat for other **nationally listed endangered species**, which have previously been recorded. They include the

Glossy Black Cockatoos,  
Swift Parrots, and  
Spotted Tail Quolls.

Further, **NSW State listed species** recorded include the

Masked Owl,  
Powerful Owl,  
Sooty Owls and  
the Brush Tailed Phascogale.

On the one hand the NSW Government has a policy through the Office of Environment and Heritage to protect flora and fauna, especially endangered and vulnerable species, while another part of the same government, the Forestry Corporation of NSW, is hell bent on facilitating the destruction of the very same species.

What is it about this NSW Government, that they feel so compelled to destroy the environmental fabric of this State?

The system is clearly broken, when the Forestry Corporation is incapable of acting diligently, professionally and meeting its statutory obligations.

It is critical that the NSW Government

cease destroying the environmental values the community places so highly on its State Forests, and confine logging to plantation timbers. That together with Carbon Credits, would turn Forestry into a profit making enterprise earning the State and community dollars, instead of broken basket case business losing millions.

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## **Propping Up a Potential Dead Asset**

### **The Closure/Sale of the Heyfield Timber Mill**

#### **A salutary lesson in timber resource management**

Gippsland in Victoria is still reeling from the loss of hundreds of jobs following the closure of the Hazelwood Power Station. And then months later the largest hardwood sawmill in Australia also based in Gippsland, indicates it is closing.

The Heyfield Timber Mill is located in the small Gippsland town of Heyfield which has a population of about 2000. The largest industry in town is the Mill employing 250 workers. The mill is operated by Australian Sustainable Hardwood, owned by the Hermal Group.

The mill's operator, has been locked in a dispute with the Victorian Government and the State-owned logging company VicForests, over the quantity of timber, which could be supplied to the mill.

In March 2017, the company announced the mill's closure, saying the shutdown would begin in August This in turn led to a series of workers' protests at Victoria's State Parliament.

The dispute arose because of the shortage of timber. VicForests, intended to slash the mill's timber supply from

130,000 cubic metres to 80,000 cubic metres in 2017, and to 60,000 cubic meters in 2018 and again in 2019, because of dwindling log supplies. ASH demanded the 130,000 cubic meters to maintain viability. (The original unsigned contract was to supply between 125,000 and 155,000 cubic metres of timber every year from 1 July 2017, until 30 June 2034.)

The hardwood processed at the mill, grew in the environmentally sensitive central highlands. The management of the Victorian forests like those in NSW have been characterised by over logging. Add to that the destruction of 26% (some reports say 40%) of the remaining harvestable supply in the 2009 Black Saturday Victorian bushfires, it is little wonder there is a supply crisis. The regeneration rate for mountain ash is over 80 years and over 110 years for timber in the mixed forests.

To save the 250 mill jobs, the Victorian Government reached an in principal agreement with ASH to buy the Heyfield Mill and keep the sawmill operating and keep the existing workers employed. An initial offer of \$40 million was rejected and speculation is that the final price was about \$50 million (subject to due diligence)

Commentators have said that despite the Government's assurances, job losses will be inevitable because the supply of timber simply cannot be maintained.

The mountain ash forests are also home to the critically endangered Leadbeater's possum, - Victoria's emblem. Industry maintains that large areas of forest are tied up to protecting the Leadbeater's possum and in turn have led to the declining timber supply.

However, the Wilderness Society have said that just 3,000 ha (1.2%) of forest allocated to VicForests for logging ash forest in Victoria's east, was set aside for the Leadbeater's possum. It was equivalent to 0.16 % of the 1.82 million

hectares of state forest allocated to VicForests for logging all forests across eastern Victoria.

The Wilderness Society is proposing the establishment of a **Great Forest National Park**, arguing that preserving the mountain ash trees (which are also an endangered species) and facilitating tourism would boost jobs and the State's economy more than the timber mills.

**It has also been suggested to VicForests that they would be far more profitable leaving the trees standings and marketing the forests as carbon offsets.**

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## **Coastwatchers AGM Saturday 23 September 2017**

The Coastwatchers Association's Annual General Meeting is to held on Saturday 23 September at 2.00pm at the Tomakin Community Hall.

The Committee is still considering whether the AGM will be followed by a Special General Meeting to formerly adopt the new NSW Fair Trading Constitution, requirements introduced in August 2016. This may be deferred to a later date.

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## **Rabbit Control Continues in Eurobodalla**

The Eurobodalla Shire's Environment Team are commended for their efforts to reduce the numbers of rabbits across the Shire. Rabbit warrens have been destroyed and fumigated in Tuross, Long Beach and South Durras.



The new Korean strain of Calicivirus (RHDV-K5) was released across nearly every part of the Shire. Post release monitoring has shown an excellent uptake, with a rapid decline in rabbit numbers.

Follow up work to the virus release and the fumigation, has been in progress, with nocturnal low caliber shooting by an expert, being the primary method of control.

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## **Save the Date Wednesday 23 August 2017**

## **Coastwatchers Public Meeting in Moruya**

## **"NSW Forestry Logging Issues"**