

Partnerships protect cultural heritage

A new chapter for
the Pilliga

Record bird breeding
season in red gum
wetlands

*PLUS: free
mouse mat inside!*

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from the chief executive

In its role as manager of 2.8 million hectares of native forest and plantations across the State, Forests NSW engages with a wide range of stakeholders – including our industry customers, recreational forest visitors, neighbours, indigenous people and local conservation groups.

Recent decades have seen a shift in community interest and expectations about how forests are managed with a move towards more formal and active levels of community involvement.

Forest NSW realises that our capacity to fulfil our charter and continue to generate economic, environmental and social benefits for the community will rely increasingly on productive partnerships with the people who use and depend for their livelihoods on State forests.

This edition of the *Bush Telegraph* features just some of the many ways Forests NSW works in partnership with community and industry.

For example, on page 10 we focus on how community partnerships are essential in the conservation of Aboriginal cultural heritage across the New South Wales forest landscape.

On page 12, former Pilliga Scrub mill owner Tom Underwood reflects on his 54-year milling career and the Western Woodlands decision which will see the ongoing management of newly formed Community Conservation Areas by a Community Conservation Council.

And on page 15 you can read about how Forest NSW is now working with the NSW Department of Natural Resources and the Murrumbidgee Wetlands Working Group to revive Markeys Lagoon, boosting bird breeding in the area.

Happy reading and don't miss the free mouse mat included in this issue.



Peter Duncan
Chief Executive



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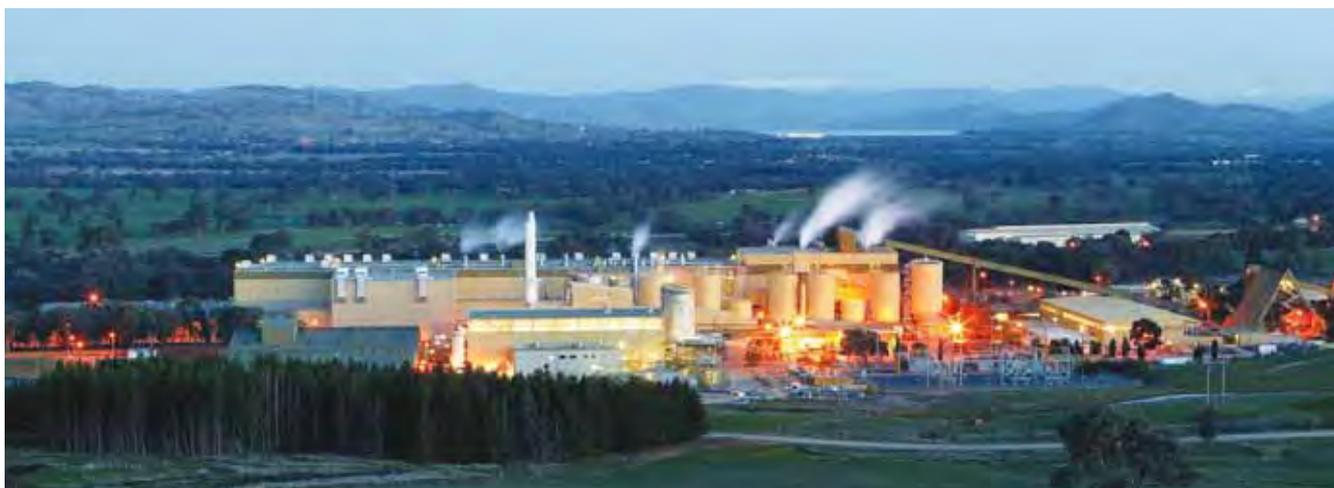
Forests NSW is a Public Trading Enterprise within the NSW Department of Primary Industries.

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Cover photograph Forests NSW is working in partnership with stakeholders to protect cultural heritage for current and future generations. See page 10 for story. *Photo by Michael Wee/ Forests NSW Image Library*

New council to focus on industry development



A new forest industry advisory council established mid-2005 will canvass development opportunities for the State's timber industry.

Created by the New South Wales Minister for Primary Industries, Ian Macdonald, the NSW Forestry and Forest Products Advisory Council is designed to look at growth prospects for the State's timber industry and provide advice to Government on ways to capitalise on opportunities.

"This council will provide the Government with direct advice on investment opportunities, regional industry development, innovative techniques and products, and novel approaches to natural resource management," Mr Macdonald said.

"Communities right across this State rely on a healthy, vibrant timber industry. In fact, the State's timber industry contributes nearly \$1 billion to our State economy every year, and supports more than 7,000 jobs in regional towns across NSW.

"We are planning for an industry we expect to grow by 70 per cent in the next five years.

"I want our local industry to be known for world's best practices, cutting-edge research and technology, strict environmental standards, and an enviable safety record".

The initial task for the Advisory Council has been to provide constructive comments on the development of a draft forest and timber industry strategy. The strategy is being drafted by the NSW Department of Primary Industries and the NSW Department of Natural Resources.

The council has now met three times and will meet again in March to review a final draft of the strategy. The strategy will then be released for public comment.

– **Rick Fowler** Policy Officer, Sydney

A new wood flow planning system and forest industry advisory council will assist Forests NSW plan for the future of an industry expected to grow by 70 per cent in the next five years. Photo courtesy Norske Skog Albury

Gold award for wood flow planning system



Left to right: Forests NSW chief executive, Peter Duncan; forester, Jules Crawshaw; and director-general of the NSW Department of Primary Industries, Barry Buffier at the awards ceremony. *Photo courtesy NSW Premier's Department*

Forests NSW has won a gold award in the 2005 New South Wales Premier's Public Sector Awards for the conceptual design, development and application of a new high-tech plantation management system.

The annual awards recognise excellence in the NSW Public Sector and attracted 110 nominations from 31 NSW's agencies last year.

Forests NSW took line honours in the Business, Management and Financial Performance category.

The intricate computer system draws on existing data to model timber growth, harvest and product delivery over the lifecycle of plantations in a region.

It was designed specifically for the Hume region where it is being used to forecast the flow of softwood plantation timber from forest to customer.

In a growing industry, the system enables Forests NSW to meet current plantation timber demands and to plan for future needs.

Streamlining planning and forecasting capabilities means more efficient management of staff time, road networks and heavy machinery.

The system allows Forests NSW to sharpen its plantation management expertise with ongoing monetary savings, consistent and timely delivery of timber and an eye on the future.

– **Carmen Perry** Communications, Maitland

Highland fling a workout for riders

In November last year, 700 mountain bike riders donned their kilts to take part in the first Vaude Highland Fling in the New South Wales Southern Highlands.

More than half the competitors opted to take on the challenge of riding the 100km in one day, mainly through the softwood plantations in Penrose and Wingello State forests.

Organiser of the Highland Fling, outdoor adventure operator Huw Kingston from Wild Horizons, regularly uses State forests for his events and, along with more than 50 other user groups, helped Forests NSW develop its strategy for recreation, sport tourism and training, called *Living, working, playing...forests*, almost a year ago.

"The Vaude Highland Fling was a superb way to link some of Forests NSW most popular forests for recreation," Huw said.

"With around 70km of the 100km route located in State forests, the Fling just could not have happened without the challenging tracks and special environments offered by these forests."

Events in State forests are one of the major components of the *Living, working, playing...forests* strategy.

From mountain biking, car rallies and orienteering to dog-sledding and archery, NSW State forests play host to around 300 events each year.

Each event provides an economic boost to regional communities and helps encourage people to get outside, exercise and enjoy forests.

Living, working, playing...forests was launched with a brochure to help people understand how to organise an event like the Vaude Highland Fling in a State forest.

Copies of the strategy and all Forests NSW recreational guides are available on our recreation web pages at www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/forests or by calling 1300 655 687.

– Hilary Smith Sustainability Analyst, Batemans Bay

Highland Flingers tackle a creek crossing during the 100km mountain bike marathon sponsored by Vaude. Photo by Mark Watson



Red gum canoe destined for the Commonwealth Games

A new project in the Riverina has involved the local Aboriginal community in the creation of a river red gum dug-out canoe earmarked for display at this year's Melbourne Commonwealth Games.

Forests NSW acting operations/sales manager based at Deniliquin, Tom Halliday, said the dug-out canoe was to be donated to the Museum of Victoria as a display artwork.

"We hope it will be displayed in Federation Square in conjunction with many cultural activities scheduled to coincide with the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne," said Tom.

Funding for the project has been provided from Regional Arts Victoria, while the timber has been donated by Forests NSW.

Project co-ordinator, John 'Sandy' Atkinson, was enthusiastic about the project.

"The dug-out canoe provides an opportunity to bring the community together to create something both local and unique to show to the people of Melbourne and further afield," Sandy said.

Participants in the canoe project identified suitable trees at the beginning of summer, when red gum bark becomes thicker and more pliable. Tom said the group will construct several traditional canoes on-site in State forests with assistance from Ray Murphy, Forests NSW Aboriginal programs coordinator.

Participant Kevin Atkinson Jr said he was excited about the canoe project.

"The project gives us a chance to bring younger members of the community into the forests and teach them sorely needed cultural skills," he said.

– Sarah Chester
Public Affairs & Media, Albury

Top: Participants in building the dug-out canoe (clockwise from left) Kevin Atkinson Jr; Ray Murphy, from Forests NSW; Kevin Atkinson, Cumeragunja Local Aboriginal Land Council coordinator; and project coordinator, John 'Sandy' Atkinson. Photo by Tom Halliday

Forty-five year reunion for Forbes forestry staff

Meeting for the first time since the 1960s, 52 former Forbes forestry staff and partners gathered last year and rekindled the friendships that began more than four decades ago.

Exchanging recollections and taking a tour of Back Yamma State Forest, near Forbes, made for a memorable day according to reunion organisers Alf Halpin, Ted Reedy and Bob Henry.

"Forests NSW operations forester, Alan Smith, volunteered to open up the Forbes



office and show us through," Ted said.

"He wound up spending more than five hours with us including a field trip for three former foresters. There was a considerable exchange of information."

In a message to the group, Forests NSW chief executive, Peter Duncan, said Forbes had a long and proud tradition as part of the life and fabric of Western NSW.

"The industry continues to play an important role in the region today," Mr Duncan said.

He praised the group's celebration and contribution to that tradition and the forest industry back in the 1960s.

Today, ten staff work out of the Forbes office managing 160 State forests scattered over the vast geographic area bound roughly by Molong to the east, Cobar to the west, Dubbo to the north and Narrandera to the south.



As in the 1960s, white cypress sawlogs continue to be the main timber product harvested in the area.

With the growth, management and harvesting of timber in State forests stretching across generations, such exchanges of information are of great value to contemporary forest managers.

– Carmen Perry

Communications, Maitland

Left: Forbes forestry staff in 1965 on the steps of the then forestry office: (left to right) Stan Martin, Marj Debenham, Beverly Pietsch, Keith Heugh, Bob Henry, John Francis, Merle Day, Ted Reedy and Alan Ruge. *Photo by Alf Halpin*

Top right: Former foresters (left to right): Dick Turner, Brian Kennedy and Laurie Duffy in Back Yamma State Forest, on the day of the reunion. *Photo by Alan Smith*

Travelling north, *Megarhyssa nortoni* is on a mission

It is hard to believe a wasp could kill a tree, but this is exactly what the European Sirex wood wasp, *Sirex noctilio* does.

Accidentally introduced into Hobart in 1951, *Sirex* then spread to mainland Australia, reaching southern New South Wales by 1980 and causing widespread damage to pine plantations along the way.

Enter *Megarhyssa nortoni*: a large spectacular wasp native to the USA and one of four wasps used as biological control agents for *Sirex*.

Megarhyssa was first released in NSW plantations at Tumbarumba after the arrival of *Sirex*. Although none have been released north of Bathurst, *Megarhyssa* is known to have followed *Sirex* north to Walcha.

During a recent forest health survey in Tumbarumba pines a tree with unusual *Sirex* emergence holes was found.

Collecting this tree turned out to be most fortuitous as it contained *Megarhyssa*. A total of 53 adults emerged from the log while it was housed at Forests NSW research laboratories in Sydney.

Knowing that the number of *Sirex* wasps in an area can be decreased by the release of even small numbers of *Megarhyssa*, it was decided to take advantage of the stockpile by releasing them into Forests NSW pine plantations near Walcha.



The 20 females in the stockpile were allowed to mate with the males and then shipped north for release.

Hanging Rock State Forest pine plantations were chosen as they had suffered severe hail damage in 2004 increasing their susceptibility to *Sirex* infestations.

Hopefully, even as you read this, *Megarhyssa* wasps are doing their job destroying *Sirex*. They are living proof of the value of a keen eye and serendipitous collecting.

– Deborah Kent

Forest Entomologist, Sydney

Above: *Megarhyssa nortoni*, is the deadly parasite of the destructive pine plantation pest the *Sirex* wood wasp. Despite its impressive size, the wasp is harmless to people. *Photo by Grahame Price*



Speed key to fighting fire

During the past few years there have been significant plantation losses due to fire in north-east Victoria, the Snowy Mountain Region and Australian Capital Territory.

Meanwhile, losses in New South Wales' State forests were almost negligible, limited to a number of small areas where lightning strikes or deliberate lights have been swiftly extinguished.

Director of Planted Forests Operations, Forests NSW, Peter Crowe said a quick initial response was the key to Forests NSW ability to protect the State's valuable pine resource.

"Forests NSW system is based around a tried and tested process which involves planning, preparedness, training, detection and response. If any of these elements fail the whole fire protection system comes unstuck," Peter said.

"Our principal weapons of attack are helicopters, small dozers which can be transported on bogey-axle tippers, and slip-on units on light four-wheel-drive trucks.

"These are our initial strike units and are backed up by the heavier machinery, such as our large tankers and heavy dozers."

A recent advance in lightning tracking technology has enabled fire managers to anticipate the direction of lightning strikes and follow up through ground and air surveillance.

Forests NSW system of 'ramping' up resources to meet anticipated fire danger has also been successful.

This involves moving staff from one region to another in advance of the outbreak of fires as distinct from systems which operate post ignition.

"While there is an element of luck about where the lightning and arsonists strike there can be no doubt that swift initial response is the key to success in plantation fire management," Peter said.

– Sarah Chester
Public Affairs & Media, Albury

Above: Forests NSW helicopter piloted by Grant Johnson working on a recent private plantation fire between Bathurst and Blayney. *Photo copyright Western Advocate*

Inset image: Used to construct containment lines, this bulldozer is on standby ready to be transported to the fire line. *Photo by Julie Lucato*

Correctional centres take on silviculture

Corrective Services Industries (CSI) has become Forests NSW largest silvicultural contractor operating from bases at Mannus, near Tumbarumba, Gurnang, near Oberon and Kirkconnell, near Bathurst.

In 1998 former director of CSI, Wayne Ruckley, and director of Planted Forests Operations, Forests NSW, Peter Crowe, resurrected the Corrective Institutions Inmates Works Program.

"Much of the early work was highly labour intensive and programs lapsed when the work became more mechanised," Peter said.

"To resurrect the program the operations foresters and industry supervisors had to figure out different ways of using inmates' labour settling on tasks such as pruning, planting and weed control.

"Once we had set down the basis for contractual arrangements, including competitive rates on a per hectare basis, and guaranteed work programs at the three centres, CSI was able to equip itself and its workforce to carry on the silvicultural business.

"CSI developed specialised transport vehicles which could operate across all forest sites, in all weather conditions, and communicate through the Forests NSW radio network.

"In addition, CSI developed specialised protective clothing for its workforce and trained its supervisors in silvicultural work and use of chemicals through approved TAFE-based training programs."

For example, there are three overseers and 45 inmates employed at Mannus. About 25 of the inmates are taking up study in the Forestry Certificates I and II offered by TAFE.

Forests NSW director of Planted Forests Operations, Peter Crowe, and the director of Corrective Services Industries, Neil Daines, have agreed to continue to improve the skills of the work teams and see a bright future in silvicultural works for correctional centres if CSI can continue to deliver on quality and productivity.

– Sarah Chester Public Affairs & Media, Albury

Barking owls at home on the range

It's official: barking owls, *Ninox connivens*, in the Pilliga State Forests prefer bush tucker to imported rascals such as the rabbit. New South Wales Department of Primary Industries' principal research scientist Dr Rod Kavanagh has spent the past few years keeping tabs on these fascinating but elusive birds. Here he gives us a brief of his findings:

In June 2004, nine barking owls from eight territories were trapped, released and radio-tracked for one year in the Pilliga forests of north-western NSW.

The study identified important aspects of this vulnerable species' ecology, enabling the development of guidelines for conserving barking owls in timber producing forests.

The research showed that barking owl pairs in the Pilliga forests live year round in non-overlapping home-ranges of approximately 2,000 hectares.

The owls used most of the forest vegetation types available in their home-ranges, but preferred particular subsets of tree species associations for hunting, nesting and roosting activities.

A feature of the owls in the Pilliga is their diet of native prey species, including sugar gliders, bats, birds and insects, compared to some other locations where European rabbits form the main food component.

Perhaps for this reason forest edges were not an important element of habitat for barking owls in the Pilliga as they appear to be at some other locations.

The Pilliga forests have a long history of selective logging, yet there appeared to be no evidence of owls avoiding logged areas within their home-ranges.

Most pairs of owls attempted to breed during the study but only half were successful, each

producing two or three young. Nest predation by goannas appeared to be a significant cause of nest failure for the other pairs.

Management guidelines arising from this study are being incorporated into the negotiated outcomes of the recent Brigalow and Nandewar regions land-use decision.

These changes will increase the wood supply available from areas previously excluded on the basis of the precautionary principle. Targeted searching will continue to locate and protect nest sites and important roosting areas for the owls.

Recent research showed that barking owl pairs in the Pilliga forests live in non-overlapping home-ranges of approximately 2,000 hectares. Photo copyright Esther Beaton



Threatened cycad found in abundance



A northern New South Wales cycad only represented in the NSW Wildlife Atlas by around 50 plants has been the focus of new interest over the last few months.

Renamed in 1992, the plant, *Macrozamia johnsonii*, is now estimated to have

more than 2.1 million individual adult plants within its known distribution at more than 280 sites.

"There are still many sites where we are fairly certain this plant exists that we have not yet visited," said Forests NSW ecologist, Paul Meek.

"We now know it is abundant within its distribution."

Paul's Forests NSW colleague, flora ecologist, Doug Binns and Forests NSW staff have been painstakingly surveying for the plant and plotting its distribution and abundance over the past year.

The plant population occurs within a 22,000 hectare range mostly in national parks and State forests in the Chaelundi and Dalmorton area north-west of Dorrigo.

"Our task now is to continue monitor-

ing the species to understand how it is affected by disturbance such as logging and burning," Doug said.

"This information is important, as it is a very long-lived plant, taking some 20 years to reach maturity, and we believe it is capable of living for more than 500 and possibly up to 1000 years."

The ongoing monitoring work will be a component of a management plan for the species which replaces the Threatened Species License prescription of retaining greater than 90 per cent of individuals within a logging area.

– Howard Spencer
Public Affairs & Media, Coffs Harbour

Left: *Macrozamia johnsonii* in the Dalmorton area on the north coast of NSW. Photo by Paul Meek

Recovery for threatened ecological community

Collaborative action across state and local Government, industry and community is proving essential in the recovery of the Kurri Sand Swamp Woodland (KSSW).

Listed as a threatened ecological community, the KSSW is restricted to soils that occur over sand deposits in the Kurri Kurri and Cessnock areas in the Lower Hunter Valley. Areas have been identified as occurring within Aberdare and Cessnock State Forests as well as Werakata National Park, on crown land and private property.

Approximately 50 per cent of the KSSW has been lost due to clearing for urban and industrial development. The remaining 2,500 hectares continues to face threats such as fire, rubbish dumping, trail bike riding, weed invasion and nutrient levels.

The KSSW recovery team was established in early 2005 and consists of representatives from the New South Wales

Department of Environment and Conservation, Cessnock City Council, Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority, Department of Lands, NSW Roads and Traffic Authority, the Rural Fire Service, Forests NSW and representatives from environmental consulting firms, research bodies, industry and the local community.

The draft recovery plan outlines what needs to be done to conserve the woodland. A key objective is community education and involvement in managing the woodland including minimising identified threats, research, monitoring and off-reserve conservation where possible.

With the KSSW community now being mapped and the draft recovery plan on public exhibition, conservation of the threatened community is on track.



Kurri Sand Swamp Woodland, near Cessnock, is the focus of a new collaborative conservation plan. Photo by Trish Hogbin

– Adam Fawcett, Ecologist, Maitland



Climbing the tree of opportunity

The season is good to harvest Dunn's white gum seed from native forest trees near Coffs Harbour, and Forests NSW is keen to make the most of the opportunity.

"There is currently a high world demand for seed of Dunn's white gum *Eucalyptus dunnii*," said Forests NSW tree improvement manager, Michael Henson.

"The weather conditions at present mean that the seed will hold on the tree much longer than the usual one or two months.

"It is ironic that there are extensive plantations of this species outside Australia, but in its natural state it is restricted to just two small areas in New South Wales near Coffs Harbour and another near Urbenville," Michael said.

He said that *E. dunnii* was in high demand in China, South Africa and South America.

Seed harvesting is not an easy operation in itself. Contractor teams usually include two tree climbers, who use boots fitted with iron spurs and other climbing equipment to ascend into the tree and remove the seed.

After drying, the seed and chaff is shaken from the capsules for collection and then the 'dirty' seed cleaned to remove the chaff. One kilogram of 'dirty' seed might produce about 200 grams of 'clean' seed.

Forests NSW also grows trees in seed orchards ranging in location from Albury to Grafton, but they are subject to the same problems as wild collection in that some seasons are not conducive to flowering and seed set.

– Howard Spencer Public Affairs & Media, Coffs Harbour

Eucalyptus dunnii seed collection in Kangaroo River State Forest. The seed will be used to establish new plantations in China, South Africa and South America. Photos by Howard Spencer

Grand Old 'Jewel in the Crown'

The 'jewel in the crown' was how a former New South Wales Commissioner of Forests described the Pilliga State Forests and the cypress industry in the 1930s.

He backed up his words with actions, and after a worldwide building design competition, established the Baradine Forestry Administration building, a grand old timber building that was opened with much fanfare in 1937.

Local Baradine identity Miss Pat Hawkins knows the building well, as she worked with many of the regional foresters for 37 years as the regional office typist, retiring in late 1983.

Pat can clearly remember the pokey little old Forestry office located just down the road before this new Forestry Administration building was opened in 1937.

She can also remember the hustle and bustle of the post war years when 14 sawmills operated in the Pilliga forests producing much-needed cypress framing, flooring and external cladding for the Sydney housing market.

There were more than 70 sleeper cutters producing ironbark railway sleepers from the same forests.

In late 1982 the regional office shifted to Dubbo. Then in 1992, with the formation of Western region, the cypress timber industry came under the control of one regional office based at Dubbo.

Today the office is still used and manned as headquarters for the Pilliga State Forests cypress logging operations.

"It was Commissioner E. H. F. Swain who called Baradine 'the jewel in the crown', and it was a New Zealand firm that won the design competition, largely because it made use of the local timber for almost all the construction process," Pat said.

Of particular note are the walls in the building which are a combination of Pilliga box, red gum and ironbark strips intermingled with white cypress of varying widths and proportions of each species.

"In some rooms the boards are horizontal, some are vertical and others are a combination of both," Pat says.

"All the internal doors are of a solid core with matched cypress ply veneer, producing a unique effect.

"The only machine at the time capable of producing the cypress plywood veneer sheets was used in the manufacture of plywood for pianos.

"So each of the door veneers are made with an extra strip at the bottom because the piano sheets were too short.

"Each of the mantle pieces in the rooms is made of different timbers from the Pilliga forests.

"They follow the particular plans of the New Zealand building designers and no two are the same."

All the floors consist of selected timbers, mostly white cypress and narrow-leaved ironbark.

There is a parquetry showpiece in the lobby of white cypress, ironbark and brown bloodwood. The main office and mapping room have floors of ironbark.

The office desks in the building are made from white cypress boards, with some from veneer similar to the doors.

"These desks were made at the NSW Forestry Commission Wood Technology Division in Harrington Street, Sydney, some time before 1937," Pat says.

The foundation block of the building, embedded in the reception counter, is of narrow-leaved ironbark.

Axe-hewn by hand by Roy 'Tiger' Louis, then a forestry worker, from a large dead tree, Pat said it was buried under the moist sand of Baradine Creek for many months to ensure slow curing and was then taken to Sydney where it was polished and had the inscription chiselled on it.

It was laid in 1937 by R. S. Vincent, Minister for Mines and Forests.

Along with the building itself, the visitors book (which dates from the day the office was opened) is still in use today.

There is a large vase in the office today that consists of more than 2000 glued white cypress pieces. It was hand crafted by local Baradine resident, Michael Hall, and purchased in 1994.

"It was a delight to work in such a magnificent building with a design that was so visionary and is still admired by all visitors to this present day," Pat said.

"I'm pleased that it will continue to be used by forestry staff for administration of the forests."



Top to bottom: Pat Hawkins with the vase handcrafted from 2000 pieces of white cypress. Opened in 1937, the Baradine Forest Centre as it stands today. The interior of the office showcases Pilliga timber species. Photos by Howard Spencer

Howard Spencer Public Affairs & Media, Coffs Harbour

Partnerships protect Aboriginal heritage



Above: Federal government funding administered by Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council enabled Darren Carney, left, and Stan Simon to work on a new walking trail in McPherson State Forest. *Photo by Mike Pryjma*

Centre: Handprints in Swintons Cave, MacPherson State Forest. *Photo Forests NSW Image Library*



A

S forest managers, Forests NSW recognises that Aboriginal artefacts and sites are the cultural heritage of Aboriginal people and continue to hold meaning and significance for Aboriginal communities.

Aboriginal cultural heritage encompasses much more than just the physical evidence of Aboriginal occupation and use of forest landscapes, according to Ian Abbott, manager of the Aboriginal Liaison and Cultural Heritage Unit for the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries (DPI).

“Natural features may be connected to ‘dreaming’ stories, relate to travel routes or occupation, or be significant because of events that occurred there,” Ian said.

“Vegetation and habitat can also be important to maintaining cultural knowledge and practice.”

Ian said it was important that the Aboriginal people who hold cultural knowledge are given the opportunity to be involved in identifying cultural resources, determining the significance of heritage items and places, and arrangements to protect this valuable part of our forest heritage.

He said forest managers and indigenous communities worked together to protect places with cultural significance, and enable continued cultural practice.

“This shared involvement is integral to building a landscape-based understanding of Aboriginal heritage,” Ian said.

“It helps planners to identify management responses appropriate to the cultural meanings and importance of objects and places identified as Aboriginal cultural heritage.”

Aboriginal communities inhabited and passed through the forests that cover much of New South Wales across thousands of years.

“Determining arrangements to provide access by Aboriginal people to resources used traditionally within forests will be important to maintaining Aboriginal cultural knowledge and practice,” Ian said.

Aboriginal tradition and practice has strong connections with forests and natural resources. Materials such as bark, wood, stone, certain plant material and animals and their skins were integral to sustaining traditional life.

“The connection Aboriginal people express, describing themselves as ‘part of the land’, continues today. Aboriginal communities seek to be involved in how forests are managed, to ensure their heritage is protected and cultural knowledge and practice is maintained,” Ian said.

An important part of Aboriginal cultural heritage is the physical evidence that reveals the extensive Aboriginal use of forest environments and resources.



Far left: Grass trees, *Xanthorrhoea* sp., were put to great use by the Aborigines. Stems made excellent spear shafts, grubs were collected from the hollow trunk and the sap was used to make an adhesive for attaching spear heads.

Left: Native lilly pilly berries. *Photos Forests NSW Image Library*

Capturing the forest spirit

This physical evidence includes carved and scarred trees, quarry sites where stone tools were manufactured, grinding grooves where tools were sharpened, occupation sites, art sites, meeting and ceremonial sites, cultural places and sites of historic importance.

Although the thousands of years of Aboriginal history may not be evident due to the effects of time, changes in soil profiles, successive wildfires and being obscured within regenerating forests.

Forests NSW has five cultural heritage officers based at Grafton, Coffs Harbour, Kempsey, Taree and Maitland. There are also Aboriginal co-ordinators located at Batemans Bay and Tumut.

Their role is to work closely with local Aboriginal representatives to identify and protect places with heritage significance.

Forests NSW is involved in a number of Aboriginal partnership projects.

A bronze award in the Environmental and Natural Resources category of the Premier's Public Sector Awards was won by TAFE Riverina Institute and Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre Aboriginal Corporation for an indigenous land management project using part of Deniliquin State Forest as a community resource for cultural preservation and education.

Forests NSW is a collaborator in this project to survey the forest and begin the process of restoring native flora and fauna, particularly native food and medicine plants.

Another example of partnerships is the Warre Warren joint project between Forests NSW and the Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council.

The project involves the construction of a walking trail, a viewing platform, fencing and bush tucker plantings within McPherson State Forest, some 25 kilometres west of Wyong and 70 kilometres south-west of Newcastle.

The walk will feature Swintons Cave, a wave-shaped rock with artwork, including hand stencils. This is one site in a complex of sites extending over 975 hectares.

This culturally-rich area, containing the largest known recording of indigenous artwork in the Sydney basin, has been gazetted as Warre Warren Aboriginal Place in recognition of its cultural significance.

Management of the Warre Warren Aboriginal Place is set out in a management plan prepared jointly by Forests NSW, the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation and Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council.

The ongoing involvement of the local Aboriginal community will help identify appropriate management arrangements.

— Sarah Chester
Public Affairs & Media, Albury

An amphitheatre has recently been completed in Tumut State Forest on the Womboyne Trail, which is part of the Forests NSW recreational trail network.

The project was developed by Forests NSW and the local Aboriginal dance group Dhanyadha Wigaji, which in Wiradjuri means 'Come Dance'.

Forests NSW Aboriginal coordinator, Alice Williams, who is based at Tumut said the Dhanyadha Wigaji dance group, involving children ranging in age from five to twelve years, needed a place to practice and perform.

"With help from the coordinator of the dance group, Rhonda French, Forests NSW regional planning manager, Duncan Watt, and parent volunteers, Michelle Hartshorn and Mary Mudford, we drew up plans for the development and design of the amphitheatre," Alice said.

The amphitheatre consists of a circular stage surrounded by tiered seating for elders of the community.

"Surrounded by native vegetation and located in a shaded gully, it will be a spectacular and perfect setting for the dance group to perform," Alice said.

Local Aboriginal artist, Peter Bulger, a volunteer on the project, has painted a number of totem poles that have been erected around the stage.

Funding was allocated for the project through a 'Shared Responsibility Agreement' with the Indigenous Coordination Centre located at Wagga Wagga.

The agreement was negotiated with the Tumut Aboriginal Community Working Group as part of a number of cultural and educational projects currently being developed in partnership with Forests NSW, Tumut Shire Council, the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation and TAFE NSW Riverina Institute Tumut Campus.

The publication *In the Living Forest* provides some further information about the management of Aboriginal cultural heritage and forest history.

In the Living Forest is available from the Forests NSW Information Centre for \$39.95 plus \$5 postage and handling. Ph: 1300 655 687 or 02 9871 3377.

Right: This new amphitheatre in Tumut State Forest will provide a venue for young Aboriginal dancers to practice and perform. Photo by Alice Williams





■ **It's little wonder that Pilliga Scrub**

identity Tom Underwood ended up at the saw bench: his father, uncle and mother were all sawmillers.

Now, at the end of his 54-year career with the closing of his cypress mill, Tom has no complaints.

"I've always tried to turn out a 'FAQ' product," says Tom. His farming neighbours know that stands for "fair average quality," a grade of grain that most in this rich wheat belt hope to harvest.

Like many things in the Pilliga, Blands doesn't exist today.

In 1924 the Underwood brothers built their first mill in the forest at Rocky Creek on the Narrabri side.

This was followed by another mill at Euligal Creek Crossing. In 1933 the mill shifted to Wooleybah.

This is the mill that stands today, with some modifications enforced by fire and changing energy sources.

One of the steam engines that powered the plant is still on site, but after the first fire mishap the mill was turned over to diesel power, then after the second, changed to electric power.



Tom Underwood

A new chapter for **the Pilliga**

Above (left to right): Tom Underwood, his wife Bernie and Baradine forester, Tom Newby, at the old Wooleybah mill. White cypress is a durable, versatile and decorative timber, used here for flooring. The old schoolhouse. *Photos by Howard Spencer*
Large narrow leaved ironbark with 1890s white cypress regrowth. *Photo Forests NSW Image Library*

Tom's was a harvest of a different kind. He has been one of only a handful of sawmillers that have relied almost exclusively on the white cypress of the Pilliga State Forests to deliver specialty flooring and weatherboards that defy the voracious termite, or white ant.

He grew up beside the mill his father built at Wooleybah in 1933, after his father had previously owned and operated various mills around the Pilliga with his brother, Jack.

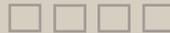
"It all started when dad bought a little property near Gwabegar called 'Lone Pine' which he worked with uncle Jack until they moved to Blands, on the Gwabegar-Kenebri Road," Tom said.

Tom's dad died when he was just four years old, so his mother Mary took on the job of managing the mill and the family, and continued the business with uncle Jack until they split the partnership in 1955.

"I started in the mill when I was 16 in 1953 when I left school, and learnt every job there was to do there," Tom said.

Mary was already doing the office work, a task she continued until about 1992. She is now 94 and living in retirement in Baradine, only moving out of Wooleybah a short time ago.

The mill sites had their own little communities. There is still talk of the Rocky Creek football team, just as there is of the Wooleybah cricket team.



There were still 15 students attending the Wooleybah school in 1967 when a bus was put on the run to take them onto Coonamble.

But many of the original sawmills in the region, like the mill Tom Underwood owned and operated at Gwabegar, have gone now.

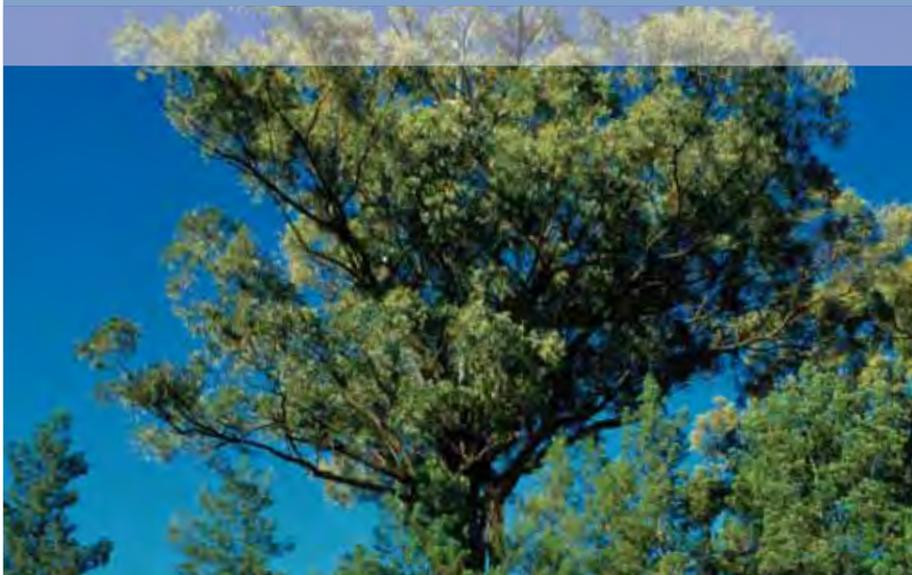
It is part of the changing face of the Pilliga, as much of the former timber area is handed over to management as Community Conservation Areas.

"We have Nick Greiner, the father of the former Premier, to thank for us taking on Gwabegar in the first place," Tom says.

Almost all the Sydney floor layers worked for Nick Greiner to learn the trade.



The old schoolhouse



The Pilliga forests

"He talked us into buying the Gwabegar mill, as he loved cypress from the Pilliga, and said he would buy all we could produce," Tom said.

This he did until the late 1990s, even after Tom had bought kilns to begin drying timber on site.

Tom says the drying process and entry into the Japanese market were the two major changes to take place during his career milling cypress.

"We were supplying two B-doubles of timber to Japan each month from 1998 until we closed," Tom said.

Tom says the moratorium on harvesting in many parts of the Pilliga State Forests came just at the time when he was deciding whether to upgrade his equipment.

"I didn't spend any unnecessary money until the decision was known, and as it came when I was so close to turning 70, the age I said I would retire, it really made my mind up to move on," Tom said.

That time came on 1 October last year, when Gwabegar Cypress Mill closed its gates for the last time, and ended a lifelong career for Tom Underwood.

The twelve mill hands, (down from 22 at the mill's peak) were offered a \$72,000 redundancy payment on top of their award entitlements, or jobs with Forests NSW or the Department of Environment and Conservation.

"I loved it, I enjoyed it. I think you are lucky in life if you can work for 50-odd years in something you like," Tom said.

– Howard Spencer Public Affairs & Media, Coffs Harbour

Understanding new Community Conservation Areas

- The Western Woodlands decision affects the Brigalow Belt South and Nandewar regions from Dubbo to the Queensland border including the Pilliga, Goonoo, Terry Hie Hie and Bebo forests.
- 348,000 ha of former State forest are now in Community Conservation Areas (CCAs).
- The CCAs were created on December 1 last year around three main groups of forests in the region: the Goonoo, Pilliga and northern Bebo and Terry Hie Hie forests.
- The CCAs will have four defined zones, including:
 - Zone 1** – Conservation and recreation zone;
 - Zone 2** – Conservation and Aboriginal culture zone;
 - Zone 3** – Conservation, recreation and mineral exploration zone such as, gas and mining; and
 - Zone 4** – Forestry, recreation and mineral extraction zone.
- A Community Conservation Council will oversee the new CCAs and be advised by three new community-based advisory committees based on existing catchment management areas.
- Timber industry participants will be offered 20-year wood supply agreements and be eligible for industry development assistance under a \$15 million incentive package.
- A \$12 million job creation package involving the non-commercial thinning of productive cypress forests will employ up to 50 people and benefit local Aboriginal communities and effected timber and forest workers.
- Exiting timber industry businesses and workers are eligible for financial assistance under a \$14 million business exit fund.
- A \$10 million capital investment fund will be provided over five years to build new visitor infrastructure in the new conservation areas.

Bringing back

the birds



This year has seen the largest breeding event in the internationally significant Millewa State forests since 2000.

From mid-October through to February, up to 500 gigalitres of environmental water was made available by the New South Wales and Victorian governments to complement River Murray flows that have resulted from recent good rains.

The release of the water allocation has seen the return of a record number of colonial nesting water birds to the river red gum wetlands in the southern Riverina of NSW.



Forests NSW planning manager, Andy Stirling, based at Deniliquin said it was a phenomenal event with the forests once again alive with birds breeding, fish spawning, wetland plants thriving and river red gums flourishing.

"Not only have the red gum trees put on a fresh flush of growth, we have also had significant regeneration of red gum seedlings, which have in the past suffered severe drought," he said.

Forests NSW monitoring shows that due to the increased water flow the wetlands are now home to thousands of nests of straw-necked ibis, and hundreds of nests of Australian white ibis, royal spoon bills, great egrets, intermediate egrets, little pied cormorants, little back cormorants and numerous other bird species.

Andy said nankeen night herons are also breeding in smaller numbers, and Forests NSW field staff have even heard the Australasian bittern in the area, which is commonly referred to as the 'bunyip bird' by the local Aboriginal community.

"It is very secretive and rarely seen and has a strange loud booming call," Andy said.

"At Forests NSW new bird hide at Reed Bed swamp near Mathoura you can observe many of these birds and their breeding activity."

As well as the more unusual birds breeding, the more common species of water



birds such as black swans and Australian darter are also breeding prolifically.

Andy said there had been a significant spawning event for native fish such as golden perch, silver perch and Murray cod due to the rise in water levels.

"Forests NSW field staff have also noted the wide range of beneficial response from wetland flora such as the regionally significant Moira grass, giant rush and wavy marsh wort," he said.

The water was delivered into the wetlands from the Murray River by river regulators that are operated by Forests NSW and State Water.

"Dozens of regulators are operated to vary the water levels and flow into a number of forests out of the Murray River," Andy said.

Flooding started in October last year and continued until February this year in order to cover the late breeding of some species of birds.

— Sarah Chester

Public Affairs & Media, Albury

Clockwise from top: Thousands of birds have returned to the river red gum wetlands in the Riverina following recent good rains. Ibis take flight over the reeds. Closeup of royal spoon bill chicks in reed nest. Intermediate egrets nesting in treetops. Photos by Mike Thompson

Rescuing Markeys Lagoon

Markeys Lagoon, a small wetland located between Narrandera and Yanco in the south-west of the State, is getting a new lease of life.

The wetland will receive approximately 180 mega litres of water pumped from the Murrumbidgee River through an environmental water allocation, specified in the Murrumbidgee Water Sharing Plan.

The project is being run by Forests NSW with assistance from the New South Wales Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Murrumbidgee Wetlands Working Group.

Forests NSW operations/sales officer, Gary Miller, said the lagoon had been dry for the past five years.

“In 2000, it received an environmental flow but it has been dry ever since,” Gary said.

“We are helping bring it back to life by pumping water out of the Murrumbidgee River, using a Forests NSW pump usually located at Mathoura.

“The pumping has taken a couple of weeks and when complete the lagoon will be filled to a depth of about three metres.”

Markeys Lagoon is one of a group of wetlands that have been identified and approved by the NSW DNR to receive environmental water allocations this year.

The other wetlands have been filled by diverting water from the Murrumbidgee, rather than by pumping as is the case for Markeys Lagoon.

NSW DNR wetlands officer James Maguire, based at Leeton, said the birds and aquatic life were slowly returning to Markeys Lagoon.

“Already a small number of ducks, grebes, herons and egrets have returned to the lagoon,” James said.

“It will also be stocked with a variety of native wetland fish provided by NSW Department of Primary Industries Fisheries Centre at Narrandera.”

The Wetlands Working Group has established native trees around the lagoon and there has been significant regeneration of native plants.

James said water should remain in the lagoon for up to 18 months.

“It is expected that this successful use of environmental water will be repeated as a priority,” he said.

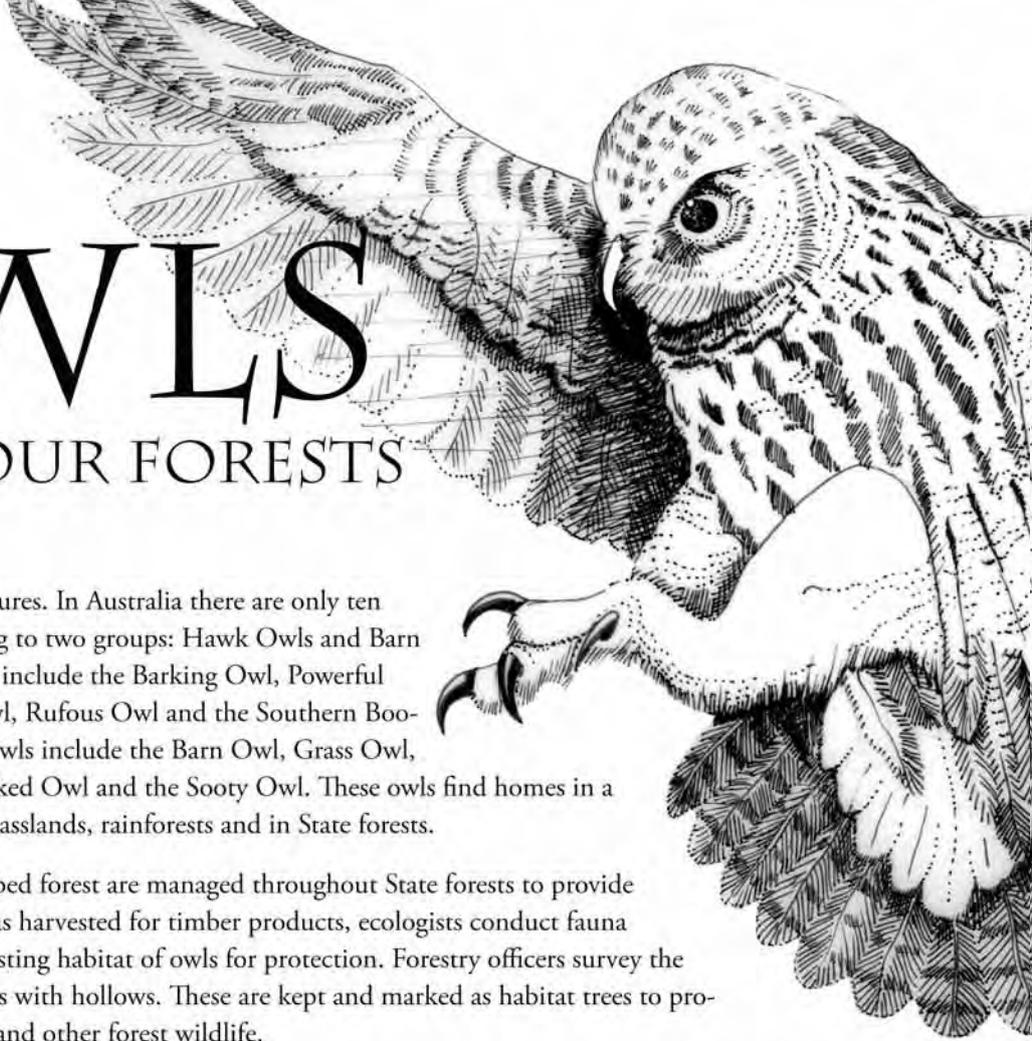
– Sarah Chester Public Affairs & Media, Albury



Markeys Lagoon before (top right) and after (above) receiving an environmental water allocation. After five dry years the lagoon is now three metres deep. Centre image: Forests NSW operations/sales officer, Gary Miller, standing beside the revived Markeys lagoon. *Photos courtesy Gary Miller*

OWLS

IN OUR FORESTS



Owls are amazing creatures. In Australia there are only ten species of owl belonging to two groups: Hawk Owls and Barn Owls. The Hawk Owls include the Barking Owl, Powerful Owl, Brown-Hawk Owl, Rufous Owl and the Southern Boobook Owl. The Barn Owls include the Barn Owl, Grass Owl, Lesser Sooty Owl, Masked Owl and the Sooty Owl. These owls find homes in a variety of places, like grasslands, rainforests and in State forests.

Large areas of undisturbed forest are managed throughout State forests to provide habitat for owls. In areas harvested for timber products, ecologists conduct fauna surveys to locate the nesting habitat of owls for protection. Forestry officers survey the forest for any older trees with hollows. These are kept and marked as habitat trees to protect the homes of owls and other forest wildlife.

The more we know about these mystical birds the more we can do to protect them for the future.



The **Barking Owl** (*Ninox connivens*) likes to spend time in the State forests of the Pilliga in western NSW. They are a medium-sized owl, reaching about 45cm in height, are mostly brown with white streaks and have big yellow eyes. Like all owls, Barking Owls are nocturnal and feed from the evening through to morning. They are aggressive hunters and like to eat birds, rabbits, gliders and insects. Barking Owls get their name from their interesting call.

They sound like a dog and go 'wuf wuf'.

The **Powerful Owl** (*Ninox strenua*) is also seen in many State forests. They are a large owl, reaching up to 65cm in height. Their colouring is grey-brown to dark brown with whitish bars across the wings and chest. Powerful Owls have bright yellow eyes, big eyebrows and huge yellow feet with brown talons. Their favourite prey are possums and gliders, birds and occasionally insects. The Powerful owls' call is a slow 'woo hoo'.



THE OWLS OF J.K ROWLING'S 'HARRY POTTER'

Harry Potter's female owl, Hedwig, is actually a male Snowy Owl (*Bubo scandiacus*). Male Snowy Owls are pure white and female Snowy Owls have dark bars across their wings and chest. Snowy Owls are native to cold grassland and tundras of North America, Europe and Asia.

Ron Weasley's owl, Pigwidgeon, is a Scops Owl (*Otus scops*). Scops owls are among the smallest owls in the world. Their brown/grey colouring gives them excellent camouflage in the wild. Scops owls like to live in parklands and inside old buildings and are native to Europe, Asia and Africa.

Draco Malfoy's owl is a Eurasian Eagle Owl (*Bubo bubo*). They are very regal looking owls and are brown with black bars and white spots. They live to about 20 years in the wild and up to 60 years in captivity. Eurasian Eagle Owls like to live in rocky outcrops in forests or deserts and are native to Europe, Africa and the Middle East.



Did you know?

*Owls have three eyelids:
One for blinking, one for sleeping,
and one for cleaning the eye. Also,
owls' eyes do not move!*

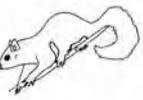
OWL BINGO

Bruce the Barking Owl and Penny the Powerful Owl are searching a State forest for their dinner:

Take turns tossing a 5 cent coin onto the grid. If it lands on Bruce, you must make the owl call 'wuf wuf', then write your initials in the square. If it lands on Penny you make the owl call 'woo hoo' and write your initials in the square. If you call the wrong owl, you lose a turn.

If your coin lands on a Sugar Glider, the owls get some dinner and you get another turn. If the coin lands on an icecream, you lose a turn because the owls don't like icecream! The first player to initial three owls in a row and shout BINGO is the winner!

Illustrations by Kathryn Laidlaw

Legend



Penny the Powerful Owl



Bruce the Barking Owl

New *Parties RSVP soon* web adventure

Forests NSW education webpages have rocketed into cyberspace with the launch of *Parties RSVP soon*, a new interactive wild forest adventure for kids.

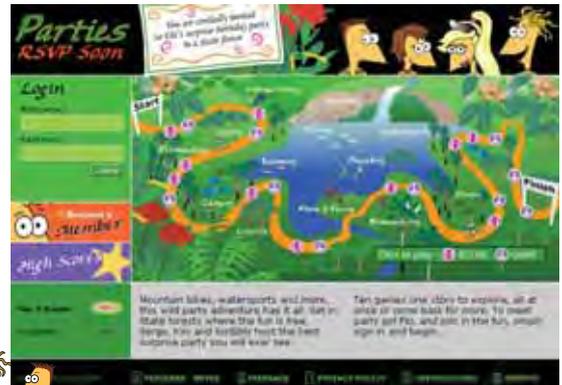
Join characters Scribbly, Serge and Kim as they embark on a birthday party adventure for Flo, a city girl who isn't too sure about outdoor fun and camping. Journey through eight animated scenes and enjoy ten games of varying degrees of difficulty. Pack Flo's suitcase, set up camp, spot the wildlife and, above all, have loads of fun.

To play, simply register and choose a nick name, follow the story and compete for the highest score.

Parties RSVP soon introduces kids to recreation in State forests, forest safety, biodiversity and cultural heritage management. Will Flo be convinced that forests are fun after all?

To join the party go to www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/forests and follow the links to our education web pages.

– Carolyn Smith
Communications, Maitland



Above: A screen snapshot of the new *Parties RSVP soon* web adventure. It explores recreation and cultural heritage management in State forests. Left: The characters, Flo, Kim, Scribbly and Serge.

Partnerships offer a chance to grow

Forests NSW is keen to foster partnerships with more agencies to enhance the delivery of its education programs.

For the past few years, Forests NSW and local councils have been 'good fit' partners as they share a number of common education themes, such as catchment management, biodiversity and heritage protection.

Local councils often host regional environment days. One recent example, the Penrith Enviro-Adventure, run by Penrith Council offered an opportunity for Forests NSW to interact with a large number of schools in the west of Sydney and provide information and resources to local teachers.

Forests NSW has for many years worked with the Department of Education's Environmental Education Centres on a number of competitions and events like Envirothon. Envirothon is a state-wide competition where high schools compete in regional events in order to win a place in the state finals. In 2005 the Central Coast Envirothon event was held in Strickland State Forest near Gosford.

In 2006 Forests NSW will continue to work in partnership with environmental education providers offering a unique insight into the management of New South Wales State forests. Scheduled events for 2006 can be found on our education webpages at www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/forests. For more information contact the education officer on Ph: 02 9871 0050.

– Gerard Nolan
Education officer, Sydney



Education officer, Gerard Nolan, talking to students about wildlife conservation in State forests at the 2005 Enviro-Adventure run by Penrith Council. Photo courtesy Penrith Council

Ourimbah Protocol moves forward

The Ourimbah Protocol community group, involved in forest and community management issues on the Central Coast with Forests NSW recently reached another milestone since its inception in May 2003.

The group has prepared a draft revised edition of its vision for the future for its activities on the Central Coast of New South Wales.

A draft version of the Ourimbah Protocol was formally presented to Forests NSW chief executive, Peter Duncan, at a meeting of the group held at the NSW Department of Primary Industry's Gosford Horticultural Institute on 15 November 2005.

The group has been instrumental in developing programs that are aimed at re-connecting the community to the forests of the Central Coast and is also well advanced on plans to clean up dumped rubbish within the forest.

The new document describes a set of four core values social, environmental, economic and spiritual – which governs the group's activities.

Forests NSW will be providing formal comment on the document early in 2006.



– Mike Pryjma

Resource Protection Manager, Maitland

Michael Williams, (right) independent facilitator for the Ourimbah Protocol group, presenting the revised Ourimbah Protocol to Forests NSW chief executive, Peter Duncan. *Photo by Rod Cartwright*

March – May 2006 events

- 11-12 March **Polaris Mountain Bike Challenge** A two-day overnight event combining mountain biking with navigation, bush skills and touring. www.wildhorizons.com.au/challenge/
- 21 March **World Forestry Day** High school students can find out about some of the many careers in Forestry. Gerard Nolan, Cumberland State Forest Ph: (02) 9871 0050
- April – July **Cumberland State Forest activity program** A fabulous range of activities for children and adults. Cumberland State Forest Ph: (02) 9871 3377 or 1300 655 687
- 7-20 April **Sydney Royal Easter Show** Visit the Department of Primary Industries' display. www.eastershow.com.au
- 5-7 May **Tocal Field Days** This unique event, now in its 23rd year combines a genuine rural experience with fun, entertainment, arts and crafts and an insight into historic farm life. www.tocal.com
- 22 May **Wildlife Safari** Years 3 and 4 students are invited to embark on an adventure to explore Australia's unique wildlife and discover how it can be protected. Gerard Nolan, Cumberland State Forest Ph: (02) 9871 0050
- 27 May **Kendall National Violin Competition Finals, Kendall** Forests NSW continues to be a major sponsor of this event for young violinists. www.kendallviolin.org.au

hot off the press

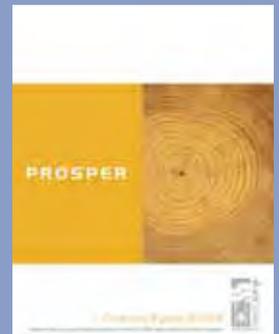
– our latest publications

Real stuff – hard copy publications

(all prices are GST inclusive)

Facts and Figures 2004-05 (free)

A pocket guide to the latest NSW State forest statistics.



Forests NSW Reports 2004-05 (free)

All Forests NSW major reports on one handy CD including the Seeing Report, Annual Report, Facts and Figures and forest research summary.

Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management (ESFM) plans

The plans set out broad strategies, performance indicators and measurable outcomes for forests management for Lower and Upper North East NSW, the South Coast, Eden and Tumut – \$20.

Copies of Forests NSW publications are available from Forests NSW offices across NSW. To locate your nearest office or to order publications call 1300 655 687, fax (02) 9872 6447 or email cumberland@sf.nsw.gov.au

Virtual stuff – new on our web site



Annual Report 2004-05

www.forest.nsw.gov.au/publication/e_sv/pdfs/AnnualReport04-05.pdf

Seeing Report 2004-05

www.forest.nsw.gov.au/publication/e_sv/pdfs/2005_Seeing_Report.pdf

Facts and Figures 2004-05

www.forest.nsw.gov.au/abouts/reporting/facts-n-figures/facts-n-figures.pdf

Research and Development Report 2004-05

www.forest.nsw.gov.au/publication/research/annual_report/default.asp

Parties RSVP soon

An interactive wild web adventure for upper primary school children. See www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/forests

Parties RGVF SOON



Mountain bikes, watersports and more,
this new kids web adventure has it all.

Set in State forests where the fun is free,
Serge, Kim and Scribbly host the best surprise party
you'll ever see.

Ten games in one story to explore,
why not compete for the highest score.

To meet party girl Flo, and join in the fun,
hop on the internet and give our education web pages a run.

www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/forests

