



## CLARENCE ENVIRONMENT CENTRE

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The Crown Forestry Division  
EPA

Dear Investigation team.

The Clarence Environment Centre has repeatedly written to the EPA reporting wilful destruction of hollow-bearing trees by contractors employed by Forests NSW.

It should be noted that one third of all land based threatened animals and birds are tree-hollow dependent, and it is well known that their continued decline towards extinction is being driven by habitat loss. That means that every habitat tree that is cut down or knocked over is hastening that decline.

As the EPA has already acknowledged, the hollow-bearing tree retention rates achieved by Forests NSW leaves a lot to be desired, and in fact we have yet to audit any logging operation where the required 10 "H" (hollow-bearing) and 10 "R" (recruitment) trees have been retained per 2 hectares of net logging area.

Unfortunately, it is not just a mark-up and retention failure, and we have overwhelming evidence that marked trees are being logged or otherwise targeted for destruction.

Two years ago we sent you (via Gary Davey) more than a dozen photographs of marked H trees at Clouds Creek that had been deliberately torched after the harvest (see below). That forest is moist sclerophyll verging on rainforest and does not burn easily, and the pictures clearly show that the H trees had burned but surrounding vegetation in many cases had not.





We never received any report on what action, if any, was taken. We assume it was the latter, as was the case of similar old-growth tree destruction at Grange, Doubleduke and Girrard (a NEFA complaint) State Forests.



Last year a short trip to Grange SF resulted in our finding two logged H trees, one with the painted H still on the stump (see right). Other than a letter confirming that the EPA had already identified the breaches, we have not been advised as to whether a penalty resulted.



I remind you that only two months ago I reported that two very large Spotted Gum trees had been logged at Glenugie, probably the largest trees in entire compartment, speculating that, given the dearth of marked H trees, that they too might have been marked.

The result of that investigation, which might still be pending, has likewise not been conveyed to us.

At an audit of Royal Camp, we again reported the logging of old-growth trees (see right), and the failure to retain the required number of both H and R trees, and again we have received no response.



Probably the worst, and certainly the most blatant, instance of hollow-bearing tree destruction, was reported from Styx River State Forest.

We found that virtually every old-growth, hollow-bearing tree was either cut down or pushed over along the Styx River Forest Way, not only in the logged area to the west of the road, but within the 50m wide logging exclusion zone that is supposed to provide a visual amenity buffer between the road and the adjoining national park.

The majority of trees were observed to have solid stumps and clearly posed no immediate danger to traffic, and in fact we measured some trees that had been cut down, that had been standing over 40 metres from the road, and must have been close to being on national park estate.



Well over 100 of these old trees had been cut down or pushed over by machinery (see photo left).

We have never had any response to our complaint over this matter and now, only last week, we received a report from one of our members that the destruction of hollow-bearing old-growth trees along Styx River Forest Way is continuing.

Roadside vegetation in many areas is the only available habitat for wildlife movement and migration. The Styx River destruction is an unacceptable precedent, and simply has to stop.



As well as reporting the road side destruction, he sent us the photograph at left, showing yet another marked H tree that has been cut down.

What on earth is going on, that the EPA appears unable to put a stop to this wilful vandalism?

We will be attending the meeting with senior members of the EPA along with other concerned groups in Grafton next week. Hopefully we can get some answers to these and other concerns at that time.

Yours sincerely

John Edwards  
Honorary Secretary.