

Subject: Assessment of Callitris woodland in the southern Riverina

29th September 2009

Dear NRC,

I am pleased that the Natural Resources Commission is assessing the remnant woodlands (Callitris and Grey Box) in the Southern Riverina.

I live in the Corowa district and I was shocked and disappointed this year when I found one of the regions most diverse birding sites (Ringwood Tank State Forest) decimated by logging. I contacted as many people as I could as to the reason why the logging took place, finding that the decision had been approved by The Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW). They had issued a Threatened Species Licence for the forestry operation and a compliance audit determined Forests NSW complied with the conditions of its licence.

I would like to make the following points:

Ringwood Tank is home to several species listed under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999 (EPBC) and the Threatened Species Conservation Act, 1995. The bird species include Brown Treecreeper, Hooded Robin, Grey-crowned Babbler and Diamond Firetail, while the most significant plant species is the Buloke. The nearby Lonesome Pine State Forest has had records of both Swift Parrot (Endangered) and Superb Parrot (Vulnerable) over the past months, and it is equally likely that these species visit Ringwood Tank during some stage of the year.

During the logging of Callitris a number of endangered Buloke trees were killed. While logging was justified on environmental terms ('to provide more space for the endangered Buloke'), a significant stand of young Buloke was crushed due to the removal of large Callitris. Throughout the park a number of Buloke have been killed due to the felling of Callitris for timber production.

While bird numbers have almost returned to normal, the threatened Hooded Robin is no longer resident at Ringwood Tank. It is fortunate that the breeding pair safely found their way to Redlands Hill Reserve where they had not been found prior to the logging of Ringwood Tank. Due to the isolated nature of the Callitris remnants in the southern Riverina any major disturbance (such as logging) places species at extreme risk of predation as they seek refuge in alternative habitats. These remnants are only poorly linked by roadside corridors.

I do not understand how the logging of small remnants can be justified when the ecological risks are so high. Large state forests such as Buckingbong can be managed to ensure that some sections remain undisturbed and provide a refuge for sensitive species, however this is not possible when smaller forests are logged. In the case of Ringwood Tank, every suitable tree was logged over such a short period of time that the environmental impact was significant. There has been the loss of threatened species and the future loss of potential hollow bearing trees.

I hope that the NRC assessment addresses the significance of native pine remnants and take the necessary steps to conserve these habitats and cease the practice of unsustainable logging.

Yours faithfully,

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