

Forest Education Foundation

# National Forest Learning Centre

The stories behind our trees

## Finding the Balance in Forest Management



### Wood as a resource

The native forests of Australia are renewable resources that have contributed to the building of our society since the early days of settlement. From the early days of forest camps and steam powered sawmills, to the modern-day specialised harvesting equipment and modern engineered timber products, our native forests continue to provide the renewable resource of timber. Wood is an environmentally friendly, carbon storing natural product with amazing characteristic for engineering and construction, housing and fine furniture, boats and musical instruments and a myriad of paper products. In other words, timber is a quite an amazing product - can you imagine life without it?

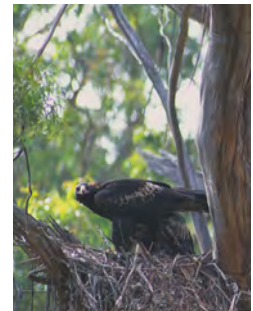


## Native forest management

However, as a society in Australia we are often told that the answer to solving many of our environmental and economic problems can be solved through the protection of all our native forest environments, and that managing forests for timber destroys forest systems. But we tend to hear very little of the world class reserve systems, the scientific research, the positive carbon benefits of using wood based products, the regional employment potential and the contribution of forest industries to the national economy.



Managing forest systems is not centred solely on timber production, as these forests also provide areas for recreation and tourism, contain many significant cultural heritage sites, habitats for threatened species and significant areas for ongoing research. This is in addition to considering the need for fire management in the landscape.



It is not a simple task, understanding and managing forests is a complex science, balancing use and non-use is a challenge. We have a responsibility to become more self sufficient in our use of timber and related products whilst at the same time maintaining a balance between the environmental, social and economic benefits of a sustainably managed native forest landscape.







## Forests in the future

We use wood and always will, but the way we use wood is changing and the way we manage our forests needs to reflect the changing demands of society. We recognise the environmental benefits of wood and the importance of sustainability, we understand the properties of timber and the important role our native forests play as part of the natural environment. The challenge for the future is about finding the balance between the environmental, social and economic needs of our society as we move forward.



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## Forests & Their Variety of Uses

### Who Can Put a Value on a Forest?

You can. Anyone can. Everyone has the right to their own opinion about what forests mean – and what they're worth – to them.

Our views are shaped by our perceptions, our life experience and our personal values.

Different people see the same landscapes through different eyes, so it's inevitable that there's also a range of opinions on what makes forests worthwhile.

People often disagree on the relative importance of the environmental, social, cultural and economic values of forests.

But there are some things we can all agree on:

- Forests are places of great natural beauty
- Forests provide us with resources that we need and use every day
- Forest environments are the cradle of biodiversity, creating habitat for a wide variety of plant and animal species
- Forests store carbon, filter water and recycle soil nutrients
- Forests are places where people earn a living
- Forests provide opportunities for recreation and inspiration
- Forests grow, die or burn, then grow again



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### Finding a Balance

These are all simple facts – each reflects a forest value that must be preserved.

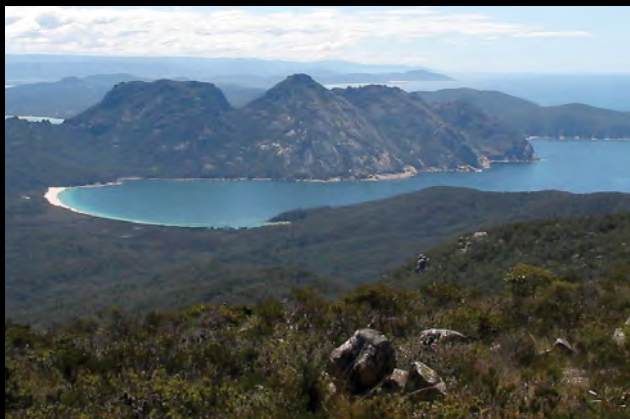
Some seem contradictory – who can be inspired by the peace and beauty of a forest environment with the sound of chainsaws in their ears? How can we build a timber-framed house or read a newspaper without cutting down trees?

It's clear that to enjoy the full range of values that forests provide, we must find a balance between exploitation and preservation – between use and protection – between society's demand for resources and a healthy environment's need for extensive reserved areas of undisturbed natural land.

The way to find that balance is to learn everything we can about our forests so that we can manage the use of them with care, knowledge and understanding.



## Environmental Values



Forests are interdependent and adaptable communities of flora and fauna – complex webs of life, from high in the canopy to deep in the soil.

They are natural carbon sinks, water purifiers and nutrient recyclers. And because forests live and grow in an unending natural cycle, they are endlessly renewable.







From the earliest times, people have depended on forests – for food and shelter, for warmth and safety, for materials and resources. People who live in country towns on the fringes of our production forests have strong links to the places that have provided their communities with employment for generations.

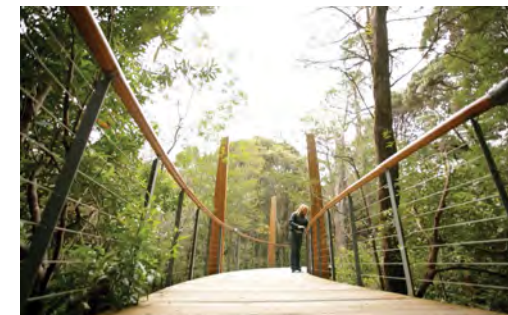


how do people  
interact with forests?

A quiet stroll with binoculars and camera. A wild ride through whirling rapids. Freewheeling on a bush track. Walking the dog. Fun in the treetops and a panoramic view of wilderness. A stack of dry firewood, ready for winter. There are so many ways to enjoy a forest.



Selected Photos:  
Richard Bennett

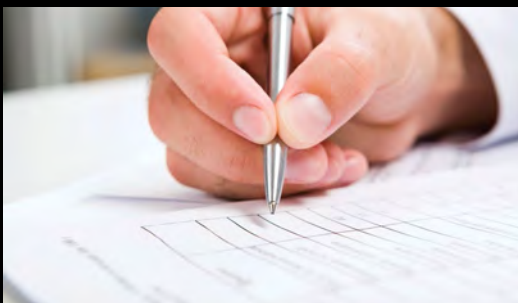




## Economic Values



We read the daily paper,  
sitting at a glue-laminated  
kitchen bench in a timber-  
framed house, spreading  
our toast with honey and  
pouring milk and cereal  
from cardboard cartons.  
Where does the wood,  
paper, cardboard and  
honey come from?  
Yes, from forests.





## Ideas for student questions

List the ways in which we use forests and forest products. Are some of these more important than others? Why?

How are forests managed to allow for a range of these activities across the forest landscape?

What factors may influence how each individual values a forest ecosystem?

Do the ways in which forests are used/valued change over time? If so, what causes the change?

## Ideas for classroom activities

Students list the ways in which they might use forest products. Try to think of alternatives to these products. Are these alternatives as good/better/worse?

Think of ways in which forests provide income, provide amenities (recreation potential) and biodiversity conservation. These are the economic, social and environmental outcomes of forest management processes. Sustainable forest management requires these three outcomes to be balanced. Think of a forest area and develop some ideas or plans for balancing the use of the forest for communities today and into the future.

Study a local forest reserve or area and explore the different uses of that forest over time. Discuss how you think people may be interacting with this forest in the future.

## Links to Australian Curriculum - Geography

*Forest Education opportunities through geography - [years 5/6](#)*

## Links to further information

*How do people interact with forests? - [further information](#)*

*Links to further [supporting websites](#)*

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