

## Forest Issues 2: Conserving Hollow-dependent Fauna in Timber-production Forests (Environmental Heritage Monograph Series No 3)

**P. Gibbons and D. B. Lindenmayer, 1997**  
NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, New  
South Wales, Australia  
110 pp. ISBN 0 73100806 5  
RRP \$22.95

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IN the absence of primary excavators, such as woodpeckers, the formation of tree-hollows suitable for occupation by hollow-dependent fauna in Australia may take several hundred years. However, intervals between logging operations in timber-production forests are typically between 40 and 120 years with the result that hollow-dependent fauna are threatened over large areas of Australia's eucalypt

forests. Many species of mammals, birds and invertebrates depend upon tree hollows for dens, roosting or nesting, and habitat. Therefore, there is a strong need to retain and conserve suitable hollow-bearing trees within Australian forests in the face of increasingly more intensive and destructive timber harvesting practices.

This book is concerned with the multiple-use timber-production forests of New South Wales. It describes the process of hollow formation in trees, and provides an insight into the roosting and nesting needs of hollow-dependent arboreal marsupials, bats and birds. The ecological and management issues associated with the retention and recruitment of hollow-bearing trees are discussed.

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## Applying the Precautionary Principle

**Adrian Deville and Ronnie Harding, 1997**  
The Federation Press, Sydney  
79 pp. ISBN 1-86287-203-1  
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DECISION makers have struggled to come to terms with the uncertainty surrounding environmental issues. For example, how should the problem of global warming be approached when there is so much uncertainty surrounding its causes and potential outcomes? The precautionary principle is a response to this issue. The principle is defined in the 1992 Rio Declaration on the environment; "Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation." The principle implies that people have a duty to take anticipatory action to prevent environmental harm, to examine the full range of alternatives and to allow safe margins of error. It means that the onus is no longer on the conservationist to prove that harm will occur, but on the developer to prove that *no* harm will occur.

The precautionary principle first emerged in the 1970s as part of West German government policy, where it was called "vorsorgeprinzip." It was not until 1987 however, that the first explicit reference was made to the principle in an international agreement, at the Second International North Sea Conference in Europe. Since then, the principle has come to be widely applied in environmental legislation and policy around the world.

Despite widespread use of the precautionary principle, there are no clear guidelines for its application. *Applying the Precautionary Principle* is an attempt to provide guidance in interpreting the principle within an Australian context. It is intended for environmental planning and development decision makers, as well as students and the general public.

The first section of the book introduces the principle and gives a brief background to aid in understanding. The second section gives detailed measures on how to apply the principle. Applying the principle involves four major steps, each of which is described with a series of points that should be taken into account in reaching a decision. The first step is to decide if precautionary measures are needed by identifying the presence of a serious or irreversible environmental threat and a lack of scientific certainty. The second step is to decide on the level of precaution warranted. The third is to think about the measures that could be applied and the fourth is to decide upon which measures should be applied. The last two steps are aided by the third and final section of the book, which gives a series of six tables with examples of possible measures that could be applied in given situations.

Within environmental policy, there are arguments for and against wider application of the precautionary principle. Some authors claim that the principle is the key to achieving sustainability, while others believe that it simply threatens progress, is based too much on hypothetical risks, and distracts decision makers from the proven threats. Precaution

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