

## What to do with the dieback trees

### Dieback

Dieback of ribbon gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*) on the Monaro has left thousands of dead trees scattered across an area the size of the ACT<sup>1</sup>. Although dead, these trees still play a vital role in the landscape.



Photo: A Ruzicka

### Let them stand

- ◆ Standing dead trees, especially those with **hollows**, provide key habitat for birds, gliders, possums, bats, reptiles and frogs.
- ◆ A **third of the threatened animal species** found on the Monaro rely on dead trees for their survival. Many common species do, too.
- ◆ Hollows are formed when limbs break or are damaged, followed by decay caused by insects, fungi and bacteria<sup>2</sup>.
- ◆ Small hollows (suitable for pygmy possums or small birds) take about **100 years** to form, medium hollows (parrots) about **200 years** and large ones (cockatoos, owls) even longer<sup>3</sup>.
- ◆ Not all dead trees bear hollows: they are found in a **third to two thirds** of mature eucalypts in tableland and mountain woodlands<sup>4</sup>.
- ◆ **Pines and willows** do not produce hollows suitable for native wildlife.
- ◆ Many fauna species have become **threatened due to loss of hollow-bearing trees**. Therefore, removal of dead trees is listed as a **Key Threatening Process** under the 2016 NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act<sup>5</sup>.
- ◆ Stands of dead trees provide safe, sheltered '**stepping stones**' that allow many birds and animals to move across the landscape.
- ◆ Due to land-clearing, grazing and dieback, hollow-bearing trees are disappearing from our rural landscapes. They are **not being replaced** through natural processes.

## Let them lie

- ◆ Leaving fallen branches **where they drop**, rather than piling them up, creates a good nursery environment for new young trees to establish.
- ◆ **Fencing** out stock will accelerate natural regeneration and protect people and stock from falling limbs.
- ◆ Fallen branches provide **habitat** for ground-dwelling native animals.
- ◆ Wood litter generates insect and microbe life that **recycles nutrients** to trees and grasses while improving soil and water retention.
- ◆ **Burning** dead wood sends carbon back into the atmosphere instead of where it most needs to be - locked away in plants and soils.

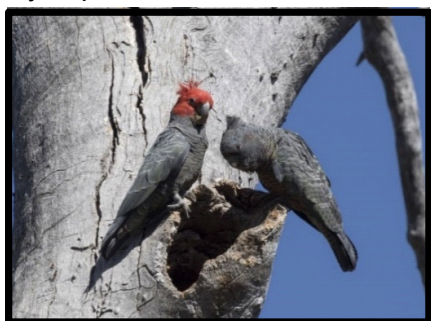


Photo: A Milton

**Let the dead trees remain. Their final service to the land - as homes to wildlife and nurses to replacement trees - is not yet done.**

**For more information, contact Upper Snowy Landcare Network, the Threatened Species unit of the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment; or South East Local Land Services.**

## References

1. Ross C, Brack C. *Eucalyptus viminalis* dieback in the Monaro region, NSW. Australian Forestry. 2015;78: 243–253.
2. Gibbons P, Lindenmayer DB. Conserving hollow-dependent fauna in timber production forests. 1997. NSW NPWS, Hurstville.
3. Scotts DJ. Old-growth forests: their ecological characteristics and value to forest-dependent vertebrate fauna of south-east Australia. 1991. Conservation of Australia's Forest Fauna (Ed. Lunney, D.). Roy. Zoo. Soc. NSW, Sydney. pp. 147–159.
4. Lindenmayer DB, Blanchard W, Blair D, McBurney L, Banks SC. Environmental and human drivers influencing large old tree abundance in Australian wet forests. Forest Ecology and Management. 2016;372: 226–235.
5. NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 No 63. 2016.



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