

Thanks to decades of support and action.

2023

Industrial native forest logging to end in Victoria
The Victorian government finally calls time on clearfell logging, bringing forward the planned 2030 exit by six years to 2024

Matt Landolfo—Victorian Campaigns Manager

So many people have given so much of their campaign smarts, their heart and soul to get us to this point today.

From blockading and running legal actions, to chatting with their friends and family and marching in the streets, right through to developing positive visions like the Great Forest National Park and the Emerald Link, and astutely persuading those with decision-making power.

In the short term it's a tremendous relief that these special, iconic natural wonders will shortly be safe from industrial scale logging, to be treasured by future generations.

That excitement is also tempered with determination however, as we turn our attention to the challenges still ahead.

With one major obstacle out of the way, we can finally focus on the enormous task of managing forests for all of their values: water, carbon, tourism and biodiversity; supporting the workers, families and communities impacted by economic diversification; and working alongside First Peoples to heal and care for Country.



2010

Second phase of Ethical Paper campaign starts

New phase in the campaign after decades of forest mismanagement and large bushfires. Regional groups and citizen scientists ramp up pre-logging surveys and legal avenues, while the Wilderness Society pursues markets and corporate campaigns—highlighting the risks for businesses of being associated with unsustainable and illegal logging practices

2009

Black Saturday bushfires

Significant loss of life, property and forests, the largest fire in Mountain Ash forests since 1939. Yet wood volumes are not reduced for almost a decade

2006

[logging halted]

to 2010

[forest protected!]

River Red Gums

New parks and reserves are created, including management arrangements with Traditional Owners, following a campaign by an alliance of conservation and First Nations groups

Luke Chamberlain—forest campaigner

As the clock ticks past midnight at the end of this year, when the chainsaws are planned to fall silent in Victoria's native forests, I will savour a quiet moment, and look to the east. It will mark nearly a quarter of a century since I threw my life up in the air to join the fight for Victoria's forests, much of that time spent volunteering and campaigning with the Wilderness Society.

Looking back, there are countless memories—of both celebration and loss—that changed my life for the better, none more so than friendships forged along the way. A silent shared nod of the head with the forest sentinel, Sarah Rees, comes to mind, amongst the crowd of people we've helped amass, standing between the chainsaws and the forest. And back at the beginning—shivering on the pedestrian bridge over the Eastern Freeway at 6am on a freezing cold morning. The giant 'Don't Log the Frog' banner unravelled below, far above the traffic. Richard Hughes and I looked at each other and laughed. We talked openly with each other, just the two of us, of why we were here, doing what we were doing. Wongungarra got saved from the chainsaws. The fight for me had just begun.



Luke Chamberlain gives a speech to supporters

2002

[logging halted]

to 2005

[forest protected!]

Otways

A new national park is created and the additional area excludes industrial logging, with a package to assist workers' transition to the plantation sector and tourism infrastructure supporting local jobs

2002

[woodchipping ends—sort of]

Wombat Forest

Woodchipping ends, however the forest remains unprotected (because of this, in 2022, logging recommences with so-called "salvage" of storm-impacted forests)



Amelia Young talks at a rally.

1994

RFA process begins in Victoria

Confusing and bureaucratic, the Regional Forestry Agreement process of forest assessment and ineffective reserve creation exempts logging from national environmental law and removes barriers to Commonwealth approval of woodchip exports

2022

Illegal logging

The Supreme Court rules that VicForests failed to properly survey for and protect two species of gliding possums

2020

Bunnings abandons Vic Forests

Bunnings discontinues sourcing wood from VicForests

2020

Black Summer bushfires

After decades of overlogging, vast areas are burnt

2019

Andrews government announces logging end date

The state government declares native forest logging will end in 2030, but we continue to lobby to bring this end date forward

2016

Officeworks moves away from Reflex copy paper

Influenced by our long-running Ethical Paper campaign, Officeworks joins a number of corporations that reject Reflex copy paper made from Victoria's native forests

2015

Forest Industry Taskforce begins

Wilderness Society leads conservation groups in engaging with industry and unions, forcing the Victorian government to acknowledge wood supply constraints for the first time

Geraldine Ryan—long-time volunteer

Deep in the action of a forest campaign it is the moments of heartbreak that renew your passion. I well remember in Easter Week, 1994 I think, standing beside the ruins of centuries-old trees felled in Hensleigh Creek, Far East Gippsland. Too big to load onto trucks, full of owl-size hollows, they were burning. And where were the greater gliders that sat on their branches during a survey we had conducted barely six months before?

Scientific surveys in the forests are often the most exciting campaign actions. I remember going on one such survey for spotted-tail quolls in East Gippsland. I woke just before sunlight. All was quiet. Then I hear it: high on the ridge, the unmistakable call of the sooty owl. Twice, three times it called, then was silent. I'll never forget that moment – the exhilaration of campaign learning and the power of nature.

It has been an immense privilege to volunteer with the Wilderness Society and, as well as the beauty of the forests, it is the wonderful people who will live on in my mind and heart.



Geraldine Ryan (left) at Tarerer Festival with volunteer Megan Roswell | Linda O'Hara

2006

[logging halted]

to 2008

[forest protected!]

Cobboboonee

A new national park is created with additional woodchipping exclusion area, following a campaign alongside Traditional Owners and local conservationists

2002

[logging halted]

to 2009

[forest protected!]

Goolengook & Yalmy

Following Australia's longest-running forest blockade, Goolengook is added to a new national park. Yalmy, one of the most intact forests in East Gippsland, is also protected

Early 2000s

Mass rallies in Naarm / Melbourne

Under Gavan McFadzean's campaign leadership, tens of thousands attended rallies for forest protections



Melbourne Rally, 4 June 2006 | Eli Greig

1999

[forest protected!]

Wongungarra

Despite ongoing logging and woodchipping across the state, this important conservation victory is secured. In alpine Victoria, the remote and rugged Wongungarra valley is finally protected from logging

Early 1990s

Campaigning intensifies

We bring national attention to the issue of export woodchipping, while we start working alongside local First Nations people



Melbourne forest rally, 1995 | Tony Furey

Late 1980s

Wilderness Society joins the fight

We become a key player in campaigns to protect Victoria's forests, providing grassroots support for the East Gippsland's forest campaign