

Why is Good News About Southern Brown Bandicoots Bad News for Forest Activists?

Because good news about the significant increase in Southern Brown Bandicoot (SBB) numbers in the state forests of the Eden management area in recent years presents a threat to the green myth, that harvesting of native forests is the root of all evil.

Unfortunately, the initial signal that numbers were increasing came about four years ago, when SBBs started to appear as part of the daily road toll of passing vehicles.



On 15 December 2014, the Town and Country Magazine published an article titled “Bandicoots thrive in Eden Forests.” In the article, Forestry Corporation of NSW (FCNSW) Senior Field Ecologist, Peter Kambouris stated:

“Before changing our seasonal baiting program to a permanent predator control program, we had only detected the southern brown bandicoot at one site following a 15,000 survey-night effort in the region’s State forests six years ago.”

As a result of the change in the predator control strategy, Mr Kambouris went on to say, *“We’ve now detected them at 38 of 40 monitoring sites since monitoring commenced, and up to 25 different sites across the vast state forests south of Eden.”*

This and similar programs elsewhere has seen the estimated population of SBBs increase to greater than 30,000. This population level is twelve times above the level nominated for threatened species listing. The Federal Government is currently undertaking a review to determine whether the “threatened” listing for SBBs should be changed.

<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/nominations/comment/isoodon-obesulus-obesulus>

No surprise that veteran anti woodchip campaigner Harriett Swift should put in a submission opposing any change and despite the evidence above, claiming “intensive logging for woodchips” as the big threat to SBBs.

Ms Swift's submission in part claims:

"One of the two remaining populations of the Southern Brown Bandicoot in NSW is in the native forests of the far south coast. Much of this area is State Forest and available for or subject to intensive logging for woodchips.

These forests, which include Southern Brown Bandicoot habitat are logged under Regional Forest Agreements, which are supposed to provide the same protection as would have been available under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act, had it applied.

The consultation document dismisses the threat from intensive logging for woodchips as 'minor.'¹ It is not minor and will almost certainly become worse under proposed NSW legislative changes, reflecting larger machinery designed to log more intensively."

<http://www.chipstop.savetheforests.org.au/bandicoot%20listing%20sub.pdf>

While Ms Swift claims SBBs would have had better protection under the EPBC Act, the evidence suggests that the SBBs are now thriving under FCNSW active management of the real threat, that is predation. Regardless of the legislative framework, it is appropriate management of the real threats that produces enhanced biodiversity outcomes.

The following photo was taken in December 2011 less than 100 metres from the edge of the Princes Highway. The forest had been harvested for sawlogs, railway sleepers and firewood for over 100 years before it was heavily cut for the remaining sawlogs and pulpwood in 1974. In 2006, the regrowth was thinned for pulpwood.

According to forest activists, this is a recipe for a biological disaster. If that is true, why would SBBs and Long-nosed Bandicoots, photographed at the same site, chose to live there?



Ms Swift has also been left speechless following the capture of surplus Long-nosed Potoroos from the allegedly woodchip decimated forests south of Eden to repopulate Booderee National Park near Jervis Bay, as reported in the Town and Country Magazine on 3 November 2014.