

# Forests Fact Sheet

Forests are incredible. Just imagine the design brief for a tree - create something that makes oxygen, absorbs carbon, fixes nitrogen, distils water, stores solar energy as fuel, makes complex sugars and food, creates micro climates, changes colours with the season and self replicates. Brilliant! Now let's chop them down and turn them into dunny paper. Genius!



## Forests in Australia

- \* Between 1990 and 2000, **Australia lost an average of 325,900 hectares of forest per year.** (1) As of April 2009, around 8% of pre European settlement forest remains in original condition in Australia. About 5.5% of this is protected. (2)
- \* **Australia has lost 25% rainforest,** 45% of open forest, 32% woodland forest and 30% of mallee forest in 200 years. (3)
- \* **Australia has the fifth highest rate of land clearing in the world.** We clear more bush each year than poverty-stricken countries like Burma, Mexico, Zimbabwe, Nigeria and the Congo. (4)
- \* **Australia clears land at the massive rate** of over half a million hectares a year. (5)
- \* **Animals threatened by deforestation in Australia:** Long-footed potoroo, Leadbeater's possum, Tiger quoll, Yellow-bellied glider, Glossy black-cockatoo, Sooty owl, Regent honeyeater, and the Spotted tree frog.
- \* **85% of all land clearing in Australia happens in Queensland.** Victoria has lost more native vegetation than any other state, and Tasmania has the highest clearing rate in proportion to the State's total land area. (6)
- \* **For every tree planted, 100 are bulldozed!** (7)
- \* **Old growth forests are particularly precious forests** that are rich in biodiversity and that support unique and precious ecological functions. When these forests are logged they may take up to 1000 years to return to their original state, while the hollows in gum trees that support breeding animals and birds can take more than 100 years to form. The current practice of total removal of all trees in old growth forests simply moves more species closer to extinction.
- \* **Old growth forests also provide the most valuable carbon sinks** in Australia. They can store up to 640 tonnes of carbon for every acre. This is one of the highest rates in the world. The continued logging of our old-growth forests represents 20% of Australia's total pollution emissions. (8)

For more information on how you can help our environment, or to make some suggestions of your own, please go to [www.coolaustralia.org](http://www.coolaustralia.org)



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## Forests around the world

\* **Over 45% of the world's native forests** have been destroyed. (9)

\* The World Bank estimates that **deforestation accounts for 10-30% of global carbon emissions**, because of rotting and burning vegetation, largely in poorly managed forestry operations. (10)

\* **About 120,000 square km's of forest are cleared annually** to provide space for agriculture, to provide wood for fuel for heating and cooking, and to provide wood for timber and paper production. (11)

\* **Nearly 90 percent of the 1.2 billion people** living in extreme poverty worldwide depend on forests for their livelihoods. (12)

\* **Trees first appeared on earth about 400 million years ago.** Dinosaurs came much later. (13)

\* **The tallest known tree** was possibly an Australian eucalyptus at Watts River, Victoria. In 1872, it was said to measure 435 feet (133 metres), but it may have been over 500 feet (152 metres) at some point in its life. (14)

\* **The Wollemi pine is a 'living fossil'** with a heritage of over 100 million years. There are only about 40 trees in the wild. (15)

\* **Global wood consumption** is projected to increase 50 percent by the year 2050. (16)

\* **Animals threatened by deforestation around the world:** Siberian tiger, Woodland caribou, Spectacled bear, Pygmy hippopotamus, Woolly spider-monkey, Orang-utan, Squirrel monkey, and Ruffed lemur.



## Useful links on deforestation -

Greenpeace – Deforestation: [www.greenpeace.org/australia/issues/deforestation](http://www.greenpeace.org/australia/issues/deforestation)

Borneo Orangutan Survival: [www.orangutans.com.au](http://www.orangutans.com.au)

Palm Oil Action: [www.palmoilaction.org.au](http://www.palmoilaction.org.au)

## Rainforests

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\* **Covering less than 2 percent of the Earth's total surface area**, the world's rainforests are home to 50 percent of the Earth's plants and animals. (17)

\* **A typical four square mile section of rainforest** contains up to as many as 1,500 flowering plants, 750 species of trees, 400 species of birds and 150 species of butterflies. (18)

\* **Rainforests are found on every continent** across the Earth, except Antarctica. (19)



\* **Rainforests provide many important products for people:** timber, coffee, cocoa and many medicinal products, including those used in the treatment of cancer. (20)

\* **Before 1500 A.D., there were approximately 6 million indigenous people** living in the Brazilian Amazon. But as the forests disappeared, so too did the people. In the early 1900s, there were less than 250,000 indigenous people living in the Amazon. (21)

\* **There was once 6 million square miles of tropical rainforest across the globe.** But as a result of deforestation, only 2.6 million square miles remain. (22)

\* **Every second, a slice of rainforest the size of a football field is mowed down.** That's 86,400 football fields of rainforest per day, or over 31 million football fields of rainforest each year. (23)

\* **There are more fish species in the Amazon River system** than in the entire Atlantic Ocean. (24)

\* **At least 1/3 of the planet's bird species** live in the Amazon rainforest. (25)

\* **The Andean mountain range and the Amazon jungle** are home to more than half of the world's species of flora and fauna. (26)

\* By conservative estimates, **9,000 species are going extinct each year**, most of them from the rainforests. (28)

## Useful links on rainforests -

The Prince's Rainforest Project: [www.rainforestsos.org](http://www.rainforestsos.org)

Rainforest Rescue: [www.rainforestrescue.org.au](http://www.rainforestrescue.org.au)

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## What can you do?

\* **Reuse sheets of paper** that have been used on one side for: drawing paper for young children; rough drafts of stories, letters, etc; student study; shopping lists; telephone messages; games. Recycle all paper that can't be reused.

\* Put up a **NO JUNK MAIL** notice on your mailbox.

\* **Print and photocopy on both sides of the paper.** Recycle all paper that can't be reused.

\* **Buy and use recycled office paper**, preferably the unbleached variety.

\* **Proof read all your work on the computer** before printing to reduce wastage of paper.

\* **Use e-mail** whenever possible.

\* **Reuse envelopes** by sticking a label over the old address. This will save money as well as reduce the amount of envelopes that would be thrown away.

\* **Buy FSC wood products** such as timber, hardboard, charcoal and paper. The Forest Stewardship Council logo (FSC) ensures that the forest recovers after timber extraction.

\* **Reduce use of Palm Oil.** Clearing forests to grow the palms needed to produce palm oil is causing deforestation on an unimaginable scale. Palm oils are the cheapest and least healthy vegetable oils and are used in lots of processed food, biscuits, peanut butter, as well as soap. Anything labelled 'vegetable oil' will be oil from palm oil plantations. Try and buy products that use sunflower or olive oil where you can.

\* **Buy rain forest-friendly coffee.** This generates cash while saving the forest canopy. Most coffee brands use new varieties that have been bred to grow in the full sunlight where they give higher yields but are responsible for forest destruction.

\* **Buy Brazil nuts - fantastic!** These always come from intact tropical forests. The bees that pollinate the Brazil nut trees need rare species of orchids that are only found in natural forests. Without the bees, the Brazil trees aren't pollinated and there's no fruit. Any product that generates cash from intact forest will help persuade people and their governments to help preserve them.

Visit [www.coolaustralia.org](http://www.coolaustralia.org) for more information about forests and for more tips on how you can help.



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14. Carder, A., 1995, *Forest giants of the world: past and present*, Ontario, Fitzhenry and Whiteside.

15. Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, 2009, *Wollemia nobilis - Wollemi Pine*, Australian Government, [http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/publicspecies.pl?taxon\\_id=64545](http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/publicspecies.pl?taxon_id=64545)

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## Other useful links about forests -

The Paperless Alliance: [www.paperlessalliance.com](http://www.paperlessalliance.com)

FSC Australia: [www.fscaustralia.org](http://www.fscaustralia.org)

Greenpeace – Good Wood Guide: [www.goodwoodguide.org.au](http://www.goodwoodguide.org.au)

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