



HIGH CONSERVATION VALUE FORESTS OF THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

The towering Mountain Ash forests of Victoria's Central Highlands are spectacular, but face catastrophic collapse. They need protection within the state's national parks system.

Victoria's Mountain Ash trees (*Eucalyptus regnans*) provide homes for at least 40 animal species, including the state's faunal emblem, the endangered Leadbeater's Possum.

They grow in stands that reportedly have the highest above-ground biomass of any trees in the world, allowing them to store large amounts of climate-damaging carbon. They cover Melbourne's water catchments, helping to keep the city's drinking water pure.

Worldwide, forests with big old trees are disappearing, and Victoria's tall forests are no different. Decades of logging and fire have taken a catastrophic toll, and now less than 1.16% of Victoria's original area of old growth Mountain Ash forests remain.

Old growth Mountain Ash trees can grow to 90 metres or more in height, and have in the past been known to reach over 114 metres, making them one of the tallest tree species in the world and the tallest flowering plant.

Forests of Victoria's Central Highlands provide important habitat for a range of threatened species that rely on intact forests, large old trees and minimal disturbance:

- Leadbeater's Possum
- Sooty Owl
- Powerful Owl
- Masked Owl
- Mountain Brushtail Possum
- Greater Glider

- Sugar Glider
- Baw Baw Frog
- Barred Galaxias

Old growth tree stands that support the highest abundance of hollow-bearing trees now represent just a tiny fraction of what they were at the time of white settlement.

This is the result of a century of logging (including deliberate conversion of old growth forest into regrowth), 40 years of intensive and extensive clearfelling, and repeated wildfires.

These trees suffer from accelerated rates of collapse when nearby forest is felled, with long-term projections suggesting a striking and catastrophic collapse in the number of large old trees in Mountain Ash forests to just 0.6 trees per hectare by 2067. This could cause the local extinction of many hollow-dependent species and the extinction of Leadbeater's Possum.

BUILDING A GREEN EDGE FOR MELBOURNE

To save the Leadbeater's Possum from extinction and protect Victoria's Mountain Ash forests from catastrophic collapse we need increased national parks protection in the Central Highlands and Yarra Ranges.

FOREST GIANTS

With an average lifespan of 400 years and towering up to 90 metres above the forest floor Victoria's Mountain Ash are among the world's most spectacular trees.

Even once they have reached the end of their lifespan their dead tree stumps and fallen logs continue to support a rich variety of life for centuries more.

