



FORESTS OF THE CENTRAL WEST

MOUNT COLE FOREST (9,000 HECTARES)

WHERE

Just off the Western Highway, 25 kilometres from the township of Beaufort, and an hour west of Ballarat.

VALUES

Small patch of forest (around 9,000 hectares) rising to almost 900 meters where snow guns can be found.

It is home to one of Victoria's most popular walking tracks, the Beeripmo Walk which can be done as a day or overnight walk.

Its forest harbours over 130 different native birds, nine threatened fauna species, 13 threatened flora species, three endangered vegetation types and two vulnerable vegetation types – under-represented elsewhere in Victoria's formal reserve system.

THREATS

Forty percent of the area is zoned for logging including clearfell.

Little of the accessible high production timber forests at Mount Cole have been protected in national parks or other reserves.

VEAC DRAFT PROPOSALS

Mount Buangor National Park is to be extended by 1,406 hectares, incorporating the under-represented Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVC), Grassy Dry Forest, and to protect the endangered Mount Cole grevillea.

Ben Nevis Nature Reserve (1,088 hectares) to be created on the northern flanks of the current Mount Cole State Forest.

KEY MESSAGES AND TALKING POINTS

- More of Mount Cole should be protected fully in a national park under the National Parks Act, or combined with an adjacent regional park. The draft recommendations retain more than 70 per cent (or 6,416 hectares) of Mount Cole State Forest with almost all of the areas open for intensive logging.
 - See map and photos: www.vnpa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Mount-Cole-Clearfell-Logging-Coupes-Map.pdf
 - Background: www.vnpa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Background-Information-Mount-Cole-State-Forest-2.pdf
- Support the addition of 1,406 hectares to Mount Buangor National Park and Ben Nevis Nature Reserve (1,088 hectares)
- However the Wimmera River headwaters are left unprotected, and much of area is left open to intensive logging.
- Little of the Mount Cole's forest is currently protected against logging.
- Mount Cole is subject to intensive logging (essential clearfell, known as 'even-aged stand management'), and the appropriateness of this is not discussed. See: vnpa.org.au/logging-to-impact-one-of-victorias-most-popular-bush-walks-at-mount-cole
- The report neglects mentioning Mount Cole is home to one of Victoria's most popular walking tracks, the Beeripmo Walk. One of the closest overnight walks to Melbourne. It does not assess its value against ongoing logging.
- The VEAC report notes (page 95) there are few large old trees remaining in the Mount Cole State Forest, due to the heavy logging of this forest since European settlement and that survey needs to be undertake.



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- Mount Cole provides habitat for species at the eastern or northern end of their range including, the shiny tea-tree on granitic outcrops around Ben Nevis; dwarf boronia and nationally threatened Grampians bitter-pea, which have both been recorded recently in the south-eastern part of Mount Cole State Forest.
- Powerful owls have been recorded in Mount Cole Forest more frequently than in surrounding areas. Detailed surveys should be undertaken to ensure sites are not impacted by logging and that there are appropriate forestry prescriptions are in place.
- Mount Lonarch State Forest (1,770 hectares) is described as a small extension of Mount Cole Range. Mount Lonarch is still subject to logging, with five areas scheduled under current logging plans. While not much is known about the biodiversity values, it is worth a closer level of assessment.
- Musical Gully and Trawalla-Andrews forests are proposed to remain as state forest but it is unclear if the current forestry zoning (SPZ etc.) will remain and the long-term impacts of firewood collection.