



RECOGNISING THE BEAUTY OF NATURE

It is not so much for its beauty that the forest makes a claim upon men's hearts, as for that subtle something, that quality of air that emanation from old trees, that so wonderfully changes and renews a weary spirit.
Robert Louis Stevenson

On the power of beauty

It is physical; it literally takes one's breath away.

Whatever we feel when we see a beautiful sunset, a magnificent forest, a glorious creature in full health, or the most minute of organisms on the forest floor or sea bed or from the greatest human endeavours: whether art, music, poetry or scientific or philosophic understanding, we are amazed.

And motivated.

Everyone, not just scientists and artists, are immersed in the complexity of what we are seeing and at some level we are aware of how the parts come together in one glorious whole.

So it is with this ancient land of Australia; long isolated, this landscape is as diverse, as complex in its nature as any—and one we, as universal citizens, must look after for the resilience of life on earth and not just for our own sake.

On the power of forests

Perhaps the most critical ecosystems on the planet, breathing out oxygen, making rain, recycling life into healthy soils, sequestering carbon, protecting an abundance of life forms

Australian forests, unique forests of the world's tallest flowing plants—the long living, hollow bearing eucalypts—along with the great pine trees of the Americas are/were the tallest trees of all.

From the top order—great eagles and owls, here koalas and gliders, pollinating flying foxes to the ground level lyre birds to the connected underground micro organisms—all transferring nutrients that run the whole business of a forest—the soils that allow growth and carbon storage (sequestration).

So how can we not love our forests? How can we see them only as valuable if supplying a few jobs for loggers now largely displaced by plantations and hence fail miserably to preserve their integrity since European occupation? So what's the answer?

Take species loss seriously—koalas are key indicator of loss of biodiversity! This is catastrophe—once koalas are gone they are gone forever, along with the thousands of other known and unknown species that are critical to the resilience of our Eastern forests.

And with them goes the beauty of this ancient and unique and most exquisite example of the power of the diversity of nature.

And an opportunity

Beauty is a vision of the diversity of life, for the potential of evolution here and globally.



GREAT SOUTHERN FOREST

So beauty is the motivating idea, a thousand year vision, for the Great Southern Forest project—recognising the integrity of this vast landscape from the mountains to the coast; and how if we can connect, protect, and begin to restore this once pristine system, we can help to save the koala, make our forests safer, our climate more liveable; and we will contribute to the beauty of nature, of life on this blue planet.

Prue Acton



Image 1: Forestscape. Judith Deland