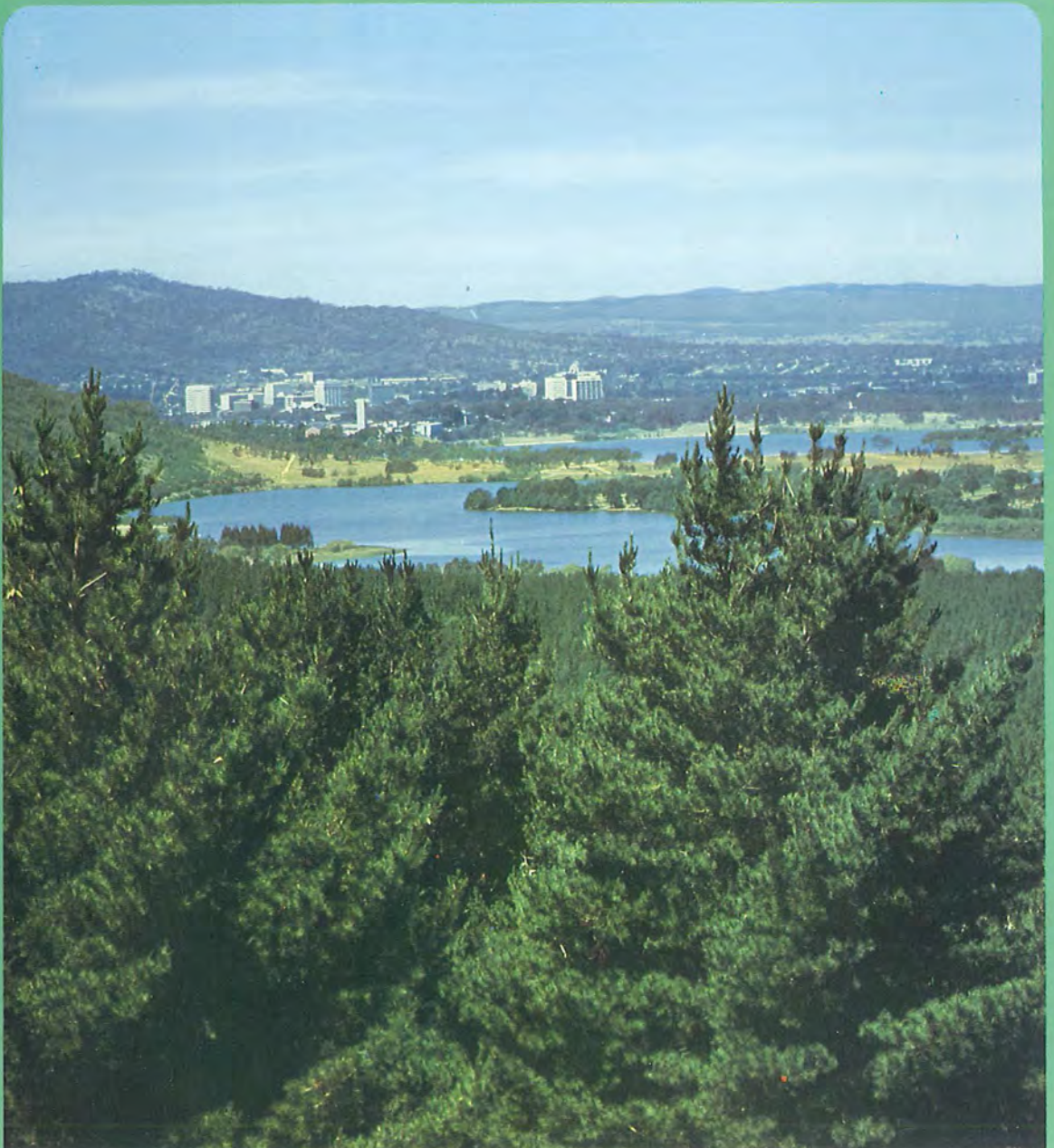


Forests Branch
Department of the Capital Territory

Forestry in the ACT



Forestry in the ACT

ACT forests — a renewable resource

Forests have always been a familiar part of man's environment and an important source of his raw materials. In Australia, before the arrival of Europeans, the Aborigines depended to a large extent on the native forests for food in the shape of animals, birds, berries and edible leaves. Today forests are an appealing part of the Australian landscape and the wood they produce is a most versatile commodity.

Wood as a raw material has the advantage of being renewable. After harvesting it can be grown again in contrast to mined materials which can become exhausted.

The two major categories of forests in the Australian Capital Territory are native hardwood forests and pine forests which are composed of introduced species that yield softwood timbers.

- 1 *Extensive pine forests help check erosion in the Cotter Dam catchment*
- 2 *Australians reap a rich harvest from ACT forests*



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3 *Alpine forest merges with snow*

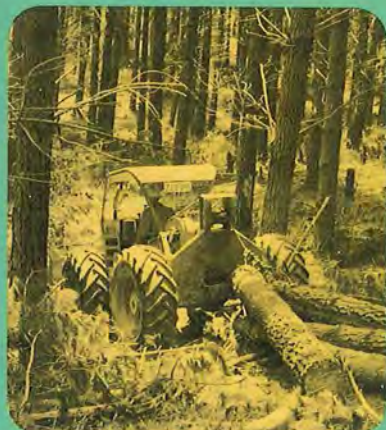
Native forests

Much of the ACT's native vegetation has been extensively modified during the course of European settlement. Native forest has been virtually cleared from flat and undulating country and the major areas of native forest that remain cover the Brindabella, Tidbinbilla and Clear mountain ranges. Parts of the mountain forests were also affected by grazing activities in the past, but grazing leases have now been withdrawn and these areas are reverting to a natural state.

Within the ACT's limited area of 2359 km² the native flora varies markedly. There are sparse groves of cypress pine on the dry slopes of the Molonglo Gorge, open woodlands on the tablelands, and dense wet sclerophyll forests in the mountains where tall spectacular eucalypts emerge above an understorey of wattles and tree ferns. Alpine scrub and bogs are found on the highest summits.

Planning provides for public access and enjoyment of the forest resource. In some areas the access is limited to protect the resource and all areas may be closed at times to protect the forests from fires.

- 4 *A logging tractor thins a block of vigorous pine in Uriarra Forest*



4

Pine forests

Most of the hill country in the vicinity of Canberra was cleared, or partially cleared, for grazing in the course of early settlement. Overstocking and rabbit infestation severely denuded much of this land and a reforestation program was initiated for conservation purposes to check erosion, provide water catchment protection and enhance the visual appeal of the landscape. The first conservation plantings took place in 1915 on the bare and eroded slopes of Mt Stromlo. This was followed by plantings in the Cotter catchment and at Kowen. When the commercial value of these plantings became apparent, plantings were also extended to attain a size and composition which would fully sustain a forest industry. Thus nearly all pine plantations in the ACT consist of the species *Pinus radiata*, a native of California which grows very rapidly under Australian conditions.

5 *Taking exact measurements of growth in Stromlo Forest*



5

Forest uses

Native forests and pine forests differ in the degree to which they serve various community needs but collectively they are of value for:

- Production of sawn timber and other building materials.
- Protection of water catchments.
- Recreation
- Preservation and improvement of scenery.
- Providing food and shelter for wildlife.
- Preservation of varied natural plant communities.

- 6 *Six mature pine trees yield enough timber for a modern house*
- 7 *Mechanisation's role in tree harvesting: wheeled traction...*
- 8 *cable hauling...*



6



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Production of sawn timber and other building materials

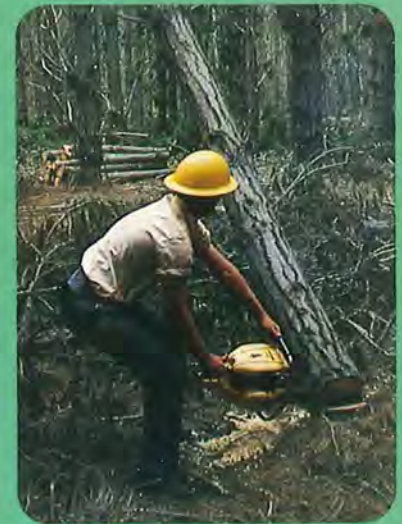
Initially in the ACT sawn timber and other forest products were derived from stands of native eucalypts, but now all supplies come from pine plantations. The pine-based sawmilling industry has grown to the point where it now satisfies much of Canberra's timber requirements and employs over 450 people in government and private enterprise.

Logging operations usually begin when stands of trees reach fifteen years of age. Several further loggings take place in the life of the stand and at about thirty to forty years after planting all the remaining trees are felled.

Areas being logged are normally closed to the public as a safety measure. This causes little inconvenience because the area being logged at any one time is only a small fraction of the total forest area.

In some situations, special care is necessary to avoid lasting damage to the landscape or to other forest values. Some disruption is unavoidable but the effects are minimised through careful planning and rapid regeneration.

9 *... but the tree-felling skill of man is the basis of a successful industry*



9

Water supply

Water supply more than any other consideration controls the expansion of modern urban and industrial communities and this applies to Canberra.

The Cotter Valley catchment supplies Canberra with water and so the maintenance of water supply is the primary objective of forest management in this area. Other uses are not allowed in areas where water quality may be threatened. This is particularly important in the catchments of the Bendora and Corin Dams which supply most of our domestic water requirements.

So rangers patrol the catchment to assist visitors and protect the catchment from damage such as might be done by wandering stock or trail-bikes.

10 *A stream gauging station in the Cotter catchment measures the run-off volume of water*



10

11 *A ranger patrols Bendora Dam*



11

Recreation

Native forests and pine forests are used for recreation by ACT residents and visitors. Native forests are diverse, scenically attractive to walkers and persons concerned with conservation of native plants and animals. Pine plantations close to Canberra are popular for a variety of recreational pursuits, among them picnicking, pleasure driving, walking, orienteering, exercising pets, horse riding, car rallying, trail-bike riding and archery.

Some recreational uses of forests are not compatible with others and to avoid conflict forest areas have been zoned for specific uses where necessary. As Canberra's population grows the forests will be subjected to even more recreational use and their value for community recreation will be enhanced.

12 *Car rally in Pierces Creek Forest*



12

Wildlife protection

All ACT forests are sanctuaries for native mammals and birds and hence they complement the wildlife conservation role of the Kosciusko National Park and ACT nature reserves.

Many birds and mammals have adapted to the pine plantation habitat. In one study carried out in ACT plantations it was found that twenty-one bird species were present compared with thirty-three in nearby native forest. Lyrebirds nest in mountain pine plantations and mammals such as kangaroos, wallabies and wombats are common.

The Cotter Catchment is a major native forest area of great conservation value as well as the source of Canberra's excellent water supply. It has a varied and numerous population of native reptiles, birds and mammals, as well as some rare amphibians.

13 *Picnicking in a sheltered glade*



13

14 *Grey kangaroos figure prominently among protected fauna*



14

Multiple use of forests: diagram of the timescale along which management progresses

Age in years	0	4	10	15	21	27	35	40
Stage of management	Establishment	Pruning the lower stems	Commercial thinnings to improve growth and earn revenue			Final felling		
Produce	None	Christmas trees	Pulpwood and fencing	Small logs and poles	Large logs for building material, plywood, etc			
Recreation	Public fenced out to reduce fire danger		Public access encouraged according to safety and suitability of the particular area					
Grazing	None	Grazing by stock possible and useful: browsing by wildlife normally proceeds naturally						

Control of fire

The ACT Bush Fire Council, staffed and manned mainly by the Forests Branch of the Department of the Capital Territory, is responsible for all rural firefighting in the ACT. The Council's other activities include fire detection — fire spotters man look-out towers throughout the summer period — and fire protection, achieved by maintaining firebreaks and trails in strategic areas.

15 This underpass gives safe access to the horse-riding area in Stromlo Forest

16 Fire is a feared enemy in forests



15



16

Care within the forest

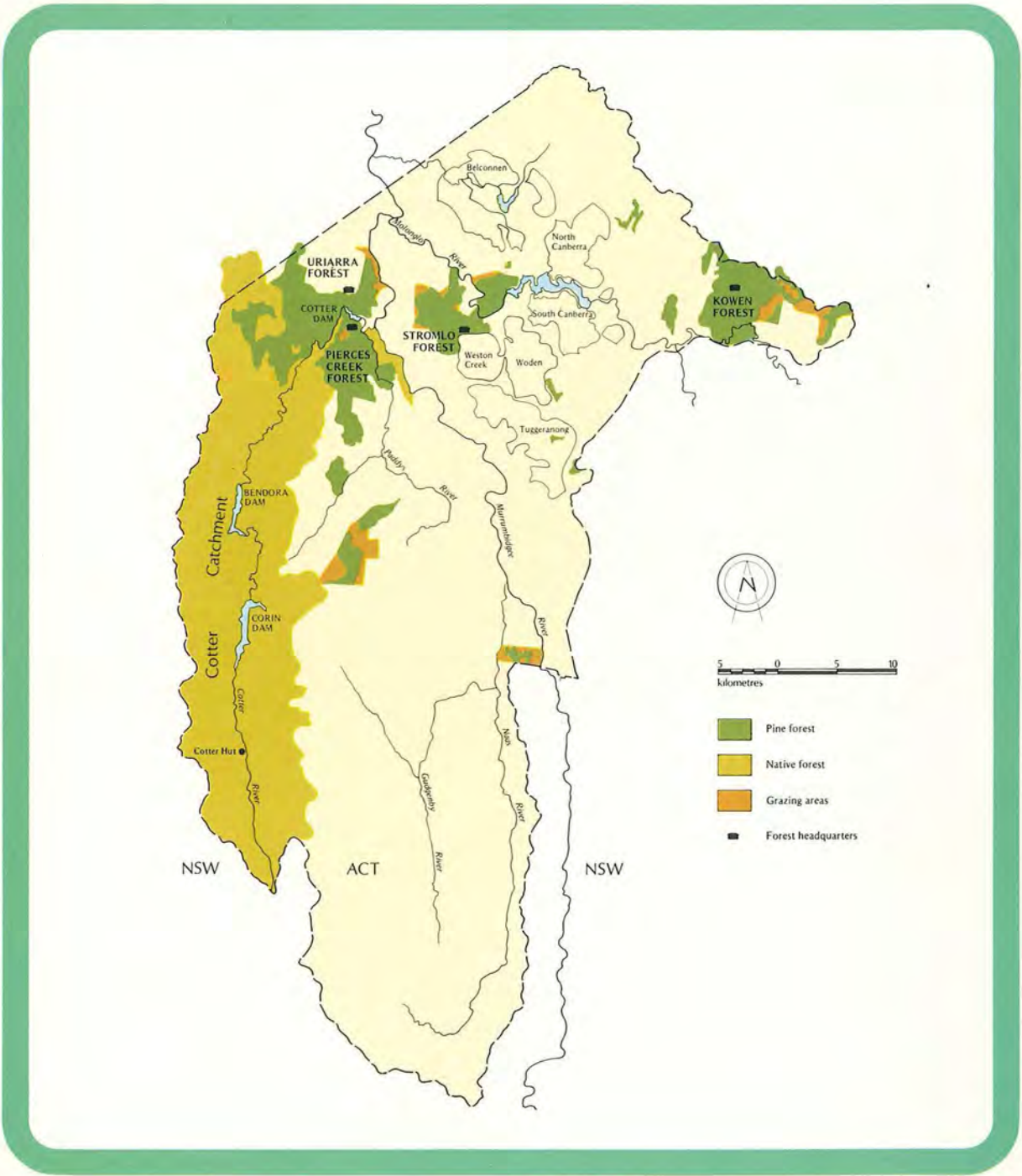
All forest areas are open for recreation except:

- When a total fire ban is in force.
- Where forest operations are in progress.
- Where certain recreational uses preclude conflicting uses, for example, trail-bike zones.
- In young plantations where the fire hazard is high.

You are reminded:

- Forests are unsafe in high winds.
- Light fires only in the fire-places provided.
- Report any fires to the nearest forest office or Bush Fire Council.
- Only gas barbecues can be used in forest clearings.
- Leave the forest clean and tidy.
- All forest fauna and flora is protected.

Areas managed by Forests Branch



Forest authorities

ACT forest administration is vested in the Forests Branch of the Department of the Capital Territory whose head office is in the North Building, London Circuit, Canberra, PO Box 158, phone 46 2886.

Field staff are stationed at:

Uriarra Forest	phone	36 5131
Pierces Creek Forest		88 1094
Stromlo Forest		88 1017
Kowen Forest		97 2865
Bendora Dam		73 2483
Corin Dam		73 2808
Cotter Hut		(not on phone)

Bush Fire Council 24-hour answering service 47 0470