

The Institute of Foresters of Australia

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Pioneering a new approach to biodiversity monitoring

Australian Forestry Special Issue released

Australian Forestry, Australia's principal forest science journal, has devoted its next issue (*Australian Forestry* VOL74, NO4) to a comprehensive review by West Australian forest scientists of the results to date of the FORESTCHECK project.

The FORESTCHECK project of the WA Department of Environment and Conservation is a continuing retrospective study of the impact of silvicultural treatments (harvesting and associated burning) in the jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*) forest of south-west Western Australia

In what can be described as a pioneering approach to biodiversity monitoring, over 2500 species, from lichen to mammals were compared on a range of treatments. The results suggest that after six years there are few significant differences in standard biological measures between those of areas subjected to conventional silvicultural practices and those of the unharvested forest.

There has been a substantial amount of research throughout Australia in the last three decades to determine how disturbance resulting from wood production management activities influences forest biodiversity. The FORESTCHECK project will add considerably to the knowledge already accumulated, especially from other large-scale field studies established by state forestry organisations, such as the Silvicultural Systems Project in Victoria and the Warra Silvicultural Systems Trial in Tasmania

FORESTCHECK is an important advance in providing the certainty that is demanded of the profession by the Australian public on the issue of whether the same unit of forest can be managed for both conservation of biodiversity and sustained wood production. Providing that certainty requires a long-term commitment to high quality research and development. The research suggests, based on the experience of the last 20 to 30 years, that there is little prospect that the biodiversity issue can be resolved unless scientists, managers and politicians alike, give more attention to critical issues identified by the research.

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