

Foretastes of forest futures

West Coast conservationists recently confirmed that what happens on the ground can be very different from what Timberlands West Coast claims is involved in 'sustainable' logging.

An area of forest in the Hokitika Gorge has already been laid waste, according to members of Forest and Bird, the Buller Conservation Group and Native Forest Action who visited there. The area at Doctor's Creek was dense, rich, rimu forest before it was logged four years ago.

Almost all the trees in an area of two or three hectares were felled but only the best part of the best trees was helicoptered out. Dozens of logs and sections of logs were left to rot. Where a log was eight metres long by one metre in diameter, a three-metre section was 'cut to waste' to make a smaller load for a helicopter. Above the first limb, a log six metres long by half-a-metre in diameter was left to rot.

Another tree was felled two metres above the ground leaving enough timber in the stump to make half-a-dozen dining tables.

After a complaint about the waste, Timberlands sent a logging gang back into the forest.

Instead of removing the already fallen four-year-old logs they cut a whole lot more, many in the riparian strip. These too were airlifted out.

Local landowners report similar waste in the Grey Valley, near Kumara, and at Mt Stormy, Karamaea.

The important thing about the Hokitika and Grey Valley areas is that they fall within the Timberlands West Coast 'sustainable management' zone. According to the company's publicity, only one tree per hectare per year is to be removed. The company claims its logging is to the highest international standards, and that larger streams are protected by leaving a riparian strip of trees. The recent photographs from Doctor's Creek indicate that Timberlands West Coast breaks its own rules.

Timberlands West Coast says it has perfected its 'sustainable management' techniques on rimu and is now applying these to beech. Our photographs show what they are actually doing: they are carrying on the same way as loggers of 30 and 40 years ago. The only difference is they now remove the logs by helicopter.

— Pete Lusk

A pictorial feature on West Coast forests at risk appears on page 24.



PETER RUSSELL

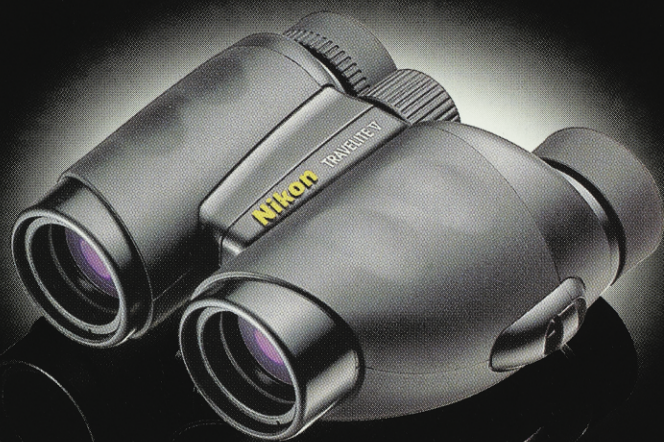


PETER RUSSELL

Westport Forest and Bird member, Peter Lusk on the stump of a rimu tree beside a five-metre wide tributary of Doctor's Creek near Hokitika. According to the conservation group which investigated damage to the forest, 'this highlights Timberlands' disregard for its own streamside management protocols'. Under these protocols no logging is supposed to occur within 10 metres of major streams.

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