

Endangered Tasmania's wild places

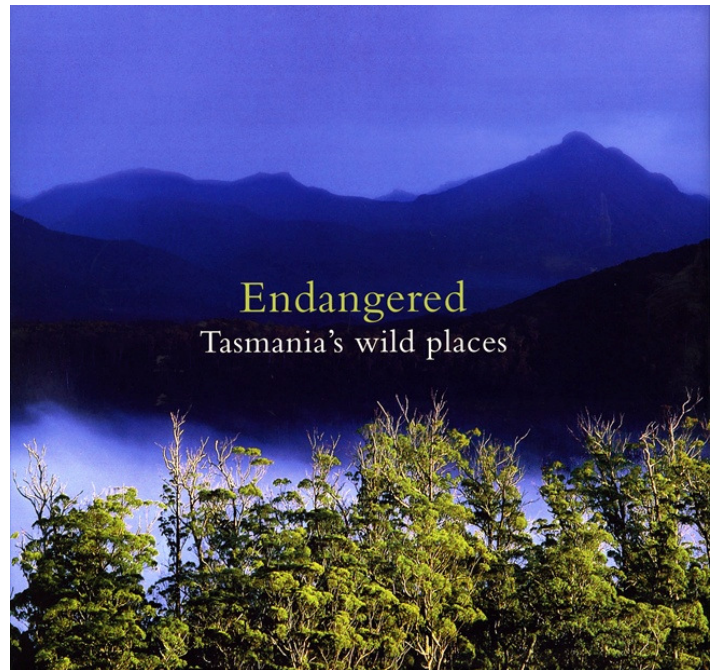
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Some of the nation's most beautiful and ecologically significant areas are at risk of being lost forever.

A visually stunning publication highlighting unprotected areas throughout Tasmania, many of which are under immediate threat from logging, mining and similar developments, including the Tamar Valley pulp mill. Containing 110 photographs by more than twenty of Australia's best wilderness photographers, *Endangered* is an urgent and moving call to save what is left of these magnificent places.

With text by Greens Senator Bob Brown, Professor Jamie Kirkpatrick (leading ecologist) and Dr Pete Hay (poet and essayist), this book's message is more important now than ever.

Available for \$69.95 RRP in all good bookstores from 1 October 2007



Preface

It is only a little over 200 years since Tasmania was completely wild - wild from a European perspective, at least. By the time the first British settlers arrived, Aboriginal people had occupied Tasmania for more than 20 000 years. Their feasting sites were marked by hills of shells on the island's coastlines, and their use of fire as a land-management tool had left an enduring mark on its botanical communities. But the land bore few other signs of their presence. Until the early 1800s Tasmania remained free of roads and towns, its forests had never seen an axe or saw, and its rivers flowed freely to the sea. It must have been one of the Earth's most beautiful places.

In the past two centuries much of that beauty and wildness has been sacrificed as agriculture, logging, mining, dams, urbanisation and other developments have encroached on formerly pristine land. At the same time, growing public appreciation of the values of wild areas, particularly during the past four decades, has led to the development of a national-park system that now encompasses 22 per cent of the State. But the task of protecting wild Tasmania remains incomplete, not least because park boundaries have almost always been drawn to exclude areas of potential value to extractive industries. Much of the excluded country is threatened by industrial forestry, and while the rest lies mostly in 'reserves' or 'conservation areas', it remains open to mineral exploration, mining, wind farms and other developments (see page 127).

Global warming poses an additional threat, because it has the potential to disrupt ecosystems and threaten the biodiversity on which the health of the planet ultimately depends. The fact that a substantial degree of human-induced climate change is already unavoidable underlines the need to protect the greatest possible range and extent of undisturbed habitats. The argument for conservation is especially compelling in the case of wild forests, because the loss of these through logging or environmental decline compounds global warming by releasing massive amounts of naturally sequestered carbon into the atmosphere.

Endangered celebrates the best of Tasmania's at-risk wild places, and makes a case for their comprehensive protection. It showcases areas like the coastline south of Macquarie Harbour, the dramatic crags of the West Coast Range, the rainforests of the northeast highlands, and the stands of towering eucalypts in the Styx, Weld and Picton valleys. Many of these places remain little known even within Tasmania; yet as the photographs and text in this book attest, they are as beautiful and environmentally significant as the island's premier national parks. They deserve the same level of protection.

This book focuses only on areas situated on public land outside existing national parks, state reserves and the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. It does not address the conservation management of undeveloped private land, even though many such areas are under environmental threat (particularly from logging). It must be remembered, too, that even national-park status does not provide complete protection - witness the recent approval for the development of a tourist lodge at Cockle Creek, within the Southwest National Park.

Such is the rate of destruction of wild places in Tasmania that by the time you read this book, some of the natural wonders it depicts will already have been obliterated. The future of the remainder will be decided within the next decade - either by bulldozers, or by political initiative driven by public appreciation of what stands to be destroyed. The outcome will determine the extent and condition of Tasmania's wild places for centuries to come.

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