

Background to Miranda Gibson and The Observer Tree



Miranda Gibson has been a core member of the grassroots environment group Still Wild Still Threatened for the past six years. Miranda is a qualified high school teacher, specialising in Study of Society and Environment and English. She has put her career on hold to dedicate herself to the campaign to protect Tasmania's forests.

In 2008 Miranda was one of two activists assaulted by logging contractors in a vicious attack that was caught on film and made international headlines. Undeterred, Miranda has continued to work towards the protection of Tasmania's forests. Miranda has worked with other Still Wild Still Threatened campaigners to monitor wildlife in threatened forests using remote-sensor cameras. Their work has documented the presence of threatened species including Tasmanian Devils and Spotted Tailed Quolls inside areas scheduled for logging. Miranda co-authored a book with Lily Leahy; "Flora and Fauna of the Upper Florentine Valley", the sales of which have helped raised money for the forest campaign.

The ObserverTree www.observertree.org

The ObserverTree is a platform situated high above the ground in an old-growth Eucalypt tree, in the heart of Tasmania's southern forests. On the 14th of December 2011 Miranda Gibson climbed a rope to the top of the tree and vowed to stay until the forest is protected. Miranda's upper canopy home is a tree under imminent threat, in a forest due to be logged any day now.

The tree top platform is fully equipped with the technology to communicate to the world. From high in the tree Miranda updates a regular blog about life in a tree sit, commentary on the campaign for forest protection, updates on flora and fauna monitoring and video footage from the tree sit. Miranda has skyped around the world, talking at events, school groups and conferences.

The area of forest around the Observer Tree is part of over half a million hectares of forest that has been independently verified by scientific experts to be of significant national and world heritage value. Despite being recommended for inclusion in the World Heritage Area, this forest remains under threat from clear-fell logging.

The Observer Tree is situated in high conservation value forest at the base of Mount Mueller, a spectacular mountain located in south-west Tasmania, Australia. The Weld, Styx and Florentine rivers all flow from this iconic mountain. Documentation of wildlife in the area shows that it is home to endangered species including Tasmanian devils.

The recently signed forest agreement has not yet brought secure protection for Tasmania's forests. The agreement still needs to be voted on in the Tasmanian Legislative Council. If passed, it still does not guarantee protection or contain any time frames for implementing conservation outcomes. The forest surrounding the Observer Tree has been verified as world heritage value and conservationists are calling on the Australian government to secure a world heritage nomination for Tasmania's ancient forests.

Malaysian timber company Ta Ann were identified in official documents as a key driver of the logging of Tasmania's high conservation value forests over the last year. Ta Ann now have an opportunity to do better by pressing for immediate cessation of logging in forests that are identified for protection in new reserves. Internationally Ta Ann market their plywood flooring manufactured from these forests as plantation grown and 'eco-friendly.' This deception must stop and the forests must receive genuine protection.

Through the Observer Tree Miranda has brought international attention to the ongoing destruction of Tasmania's forests to feed Ta Ann's veneer mills, and encouraged people around the world to take part in a cyber action, sending a message to Ta Ann's corporate customers.

Miranda is committed to remaining in the Observer Tree until the forests are guaranteed secure protection.

Anniversary Event

On December 14th the world will celebrate Miranda's one year anniversary in the tree. A global cyber event is planned. For more information: www.obsevertree.eventbrite.com