



## **‘Om gaia dudes’: the North East Forest Alliance’s old-growth forest campaign**

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## 'OM GAIA DUDES':

### *The North East Forest Alliance's Old-Growth Forest Campaign*

Aiden Rickets

The magnificent rainforests and tall old-growth forests of north-eastern New South Wales have always exerted a powerful influence upon the human communities that have lived in and around them. These forests influenced the settlement patterns of the Indigenous people, and of the first white settlers, assisted and resisted the economic development of the region throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, and by the late part of the 20th century were capable of arousing such passion in the hearts and minds of local people, old and new settlers alike, that they provoked one of the most socially divisive conflicts in the recent history of the region.

North-eastern NSW contains some of the best timber resources on the east coast of Australia, and as such has long been a prized jewel in the crown of the timber industry and the state's Forestry Commission. The role of the Forestry Commission as both the regulator and the broker of these resources had rarely been seriously threatened since the inception of the Forestry Commission in 1916, until growing environmental awareness placed forest management under a spotlight from the mid-1970s onwards.

The same forests that were a prized economic resource for the timber industry also inspired the new settlers who moved to the region, but for different reasons. The combination of a growing alternative lifestyle population subscribing to deep ecological values, and an established local timber industry sitting on some of the nation's best timber resources meant that conflict was inevitable. The fact that the forests in question remained public land, fuelled the passion and sense of righteousness of environmentalists and increased the vulnerability of the industry.

The Nightcap dispute over Terania Creek that erupted near Nimbin in 1979, a mere six years after the initial Aquarius Festival, and the subsequent establishment of alternative lifestyle communities in the region was merely the first fight in a much bigger battle which was to ensue. The same battle was set to re-emerge – not as a battle over a single icon area, but a battle over the entire forest estate of the region. The old-growth forest campaign spearheaded by the North East Forest Alliance (NEFA) from 1988 onwards became one of the most extensive and sustained campaigns of the radical environment movement yet witnessed in Australia.

Without the earlier settlement of the northern New South Wales region by proponents of the alternative lifestyle movement, it is unlikely that a phenomenon such as NEFA could have grown into the large and effective network that it did. By the late 1980s, not only had the alternative community become established, mature and more self-confident in the region, it was being augmented by a new generation of settlers and activists from other parts of the country. The urgency of the world wide environmental crisis, together with the bare facts of how little of our native forests remained in old-growth condition, fuelled a movement that was determined to stop old-growth forest logging. It was also perfectly well aware that it had less than a decade to do so or the old-growth forests would be lost forever.

The timber industry was already under pressure. Despite the fact that less than 4% of NSW forests remained in old-growth condition by 1990, the industry was still almost entirely old-growth driven. Faced with a dwindling resource and archaic production methods, the timber industry was in crisis even without the intervention of the radical conservation movement.

The campaign to save the old growth was always going to be divisive and involve conflict – there was no easy way out. NEFA's foes included multinational logging companies, governments, senior bureaucrats and timber communities, and what was at stake was profits, careers, jobs in rural towns and the political and economic status quo. The timber industry was never going to give up easily. In order to provoke the conditions for a grand political solution to the plight of the old-growth forests, NEFA had to make the status quo so uncomfortable, so fraught with conflict and division, that eventually no other option would be politically viable. During the 1990s alone, the campaign included over eight expensive and time-consuming court actions, hundreds of arrests, scores of blockades, and an unprecedented social and political polarisation of North Coast communities before the NSW government finally sued for peace in the forests.

However, the conflict had its positive side, which is what this chapter explores. This included the cultural renewal, the development of new and colourful subcultures, the blending of diverse groups and individuals and the building of a new sense of community throughout the vast bio-region of the north-east forests,

and ultimately the recognition and protection of vast tracts of magnificent forest. Whilst NEFA itself has been, in every sense, a product of the wider cultural landscape of the northern NSW region, it has in turn exerted a significant influence upon the continued social and cultural development of the region. This chapter describes the key moments in the old-growth forest campaign, then explores its wider social and cultural impacts in the region.

## Formation and Structure of the Alliance

The earliest self-identification of North Coast forest activists as the North East Forest Alliance occurred at a meeting held at the Big Scrub Environment Centre in Lismore on World Environment Day, 1989. NEFA's first active blockade took place at North Washpool, near Tabulam, later that year. Significantly, the Alliance was formed early in the first term of the Greiner Liberal government in NSW, and was a direct response to the perception that environmental politics was about to become much more hardball than during the days of the Wran government of the 1970s and 1980s. The National party had control of all major land management portfolios and was boasting a policy of 'no new national parks'. Realising that the old-growth forests could well be lost within a single term of government, NEFA prepared for a long and arduous campaign. From the outset the Alliance resolved to protect all remnant old-growth forest within its 'territory' stretching from the Hunter Valley in the south to the Queensland border in the north and west to the New England Tablelands. The sheer geographic extent, not to mention the political obstacles to such an objective, meant that NEFA would need to build a strong grass-roots support base across a wide and diverse social landscape.

One of the most impressive things about NEFA was the way it operated so organically. People had roles which suited them, they could change roles anytime, new people were always being brought in and trained and very little time or energy was lost in internal power struggles. Instead there was just a very clear focus on the job at hand and all questions were answered in terms of whether it helped save the old-growth or not. NEFA was a network not a bureaucracy, there were no office bearers, elections or even voting at meetings, it was a finely tuned and highly efficient network.<sup>1</sup>

NEFA differed from more traditional community organisations in several key respects. It was in every sense an alliance and operated upon a basis of minimal organisational formality. The Alliance was held together by an underlying anarchist ethos, which respected the autonomy of participants to the greatest possible extent. NEFA resisted replicating bureaucracy or hierarchy in its organisational form and deliberately avoided incorporation, preferring to function as a loosely constructed network of committed activists. Despite conducting a highly successful political

campaign for well over a decade, maintaining a high level of recognition in local and state media, and being recognised formally by the New South Wales government on numerous occasions, NEFA never had a constitution, a secretary or president, any formal voting procedures, or any formal process for membership. That is not to say that it was not highly organised – NEFA developed organically and pragmatically as a political and social movement and was held together by ethos, by a sense of tribalism and by a minimum set of agreed procedures.

NEFA is as much an ethnic group as a social movement, there is no specific structure within NEFA where positions are allocated. With blockades people come together and indulge in their fields of expertise. Someone might be very good at engineering blockades, another at police liaison, another at fauna identification, so each will take on their own chosen role where they feel most effective.<sup>2</sup>

The skeletal structures that held the Alliance together revolved around regular gatherings (NEFA meetings), weekend-long affairs held in national parks or on sympathetic multiple occupancy communities, at which all aspects of the coming campaign would be discussed. Meetings occurred anywhere within NEFA's geographical range and on each occasion participants would travel long distances to attend. There were specific roles within the Alliance but these were distributed according to aptitude, enthusiasm and geographical location rather than by any formal mechanism. As formal membership did not exist, all participants at a meeting were assumed to be (for the moment at least) part of the Alliance.

Although operating upon a basis of minimal formality, the Alliance did maintain a skeletal structure of volunteer 'area coordinators', who represented each of the significant catchment areas included within NEFA's terrain. Another area in which it was essential for NEFA to maintain a high degree of discipline was in the media. A key element of NEFA's success was that it used the media well and provided professional media releases, backed by a reputation for accuracy, credibility and of course news-worthiness. To maintain this precious reputation one of the most stringent internal disciplines within the Alliance concerned the protocols for the issuing of media releases. Media releases could only be distributed after they had been edited and agreed to by at least three area coordinators. In practice, media was a specialist area, and most media releases originated only from one or two prominent spokespersons at any time.

The social nature of the Alliance was always a key ingredient of its success. Above all, blockades and NEFA meetings were fun, and provided participants with a strong sense of belonging to a large, like-minded and reciprocal social movement. Clearly in the context of battles over forests involving heroic actions, multiple arrests and common enemies, a rich sense of camaraderie was able to develop throughout the Alliance. In this way the Alliance developed a tribal function quite separate to its

more formal functioning as a political campaign. The friendships, alliances and partnerships formed during the watershed Chaelundi campaign alone spawned a generation of NEFA children, and assisted the development of several fledgling multiple occupancy communities in the region, and established connections between activists throughout the region, which have continued to the present day.

My encounter with a group of activists from the North East Forest Alliance at Forestlands was a life changing experience. I was inspired by their total commitment to the cause, a conviction which saw them dedicating their lives and whatever resources they had to action. I was also impressed by the level of organisation and the democratic way in which decisions were made. It was an event that started my association with NEFA and was the beginning of some long standing friendships.<sup>3</sup>

## The Old-Growth Forest Campaign

NEFA's first forest campaign and blockade took place at North Washpool, south-west of Casino in 1989, and established what was to become a pattern of combining environmental litigation in the Land and Environment Court with direct action on site as a means of achieving both short-term and longer-term stays on old-growth forest logging. Later that year Chaelundi State Forest, south-west of Grafton, was identified by NEFA as an area of old-growth forest of outstanding value, and was set to become a watershed for the wider old-growth campaign.

In 1990, NEFA challenged the logging of Chaelundi in the courts on the basis of the failure of the Forestry Commission to obtain an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), as required under the relevant legislation, and conducted a brief blockade to stay actual logging whilst applying for an injunction. The injunction was granted but only until an EIS was completed. The Forestry Commission completed a site-specific EIS in an extremely short time frame and by Easter 1991, was planning to again enter the crucial Broadmeadows Road area of Chaelundi State Forest. At the start of the second Chaelundi blockade in 1991, NEFA was a small network of experienced north-coast activists. By the end of the campaign, some five months later, over 1,000 people had visited the blockade site, and protesters had maintained continuous presence and complete closure of the forest for five months. Chaelundi had become locally famous and NEFA had grown into an extensive network involving hundreds of people from Sydney to the Queensland border.

Protesters had arrived at Chaelundi on the 1st of April, 1991, to commence the blockade. Within several days, numerous large concrete pipes (which the Forestry Commission had stockpiled for use in road building) had been embedded vertically into the access roads, in rows to prevent vehicle movements, and protesters had set up a camp inside the protected area. The Forestry Commission made a strategic mistake in deciding to 'wait out' the blockade. In the five months that followed, the

Chaelundi camp became a community of resistance, where a 24-hour-a-day vigil was maintained, where some people lived for the duration and where curious visitors could come and see the forest for themselves and make contact with NEFA activists.

The state had tried to play a waiting game, to leave us there until we got bored and left. Instead we became a community and grew stronger and stronger in our bond as a group and in our connection to the place. We just became more determined not to let state forests trash the forest that we were protecting.<sup>4</sup>

The Chaelundi camp developed into a micro-village that contained communal sleeping quarters, a large kitchen, solar panels for power, a communication tent with excellent radio contact with the outside world, and even a sauna beside one of the creeks in the forest. The closed area of forest was publicly declared 'the Chaelundi Peoples Wilderness Park' on the 17th of April,<sup>5</sup> but amongst blockaders it was known as the Chaelundi Free State.

The long build up to the eventual physical conflict in Chaelundi meant that the outcome of this particular campaign would be crucial to the success of the old-growth forest campaign generally. Media interest had been sustained and NEFA's perception that this battle was to be a watershed was shared by the timber industry and the NSW government as well, which accounted for the enormous public resources put into attempting to defeat the blockade.

When the police and the Forestry Commission finally rolled into Chaelundi in August 1991, they faced a blockade consisting of numerous tripods and concrete pipe barricades – 42 individual concrete pipes in total – covering every vehicle entry point and repeated at strategic intervals along the main road. The community of resistance had had five months to plan tactics, perfect radio communication and learn the layout of the forest. The police operations involved the use of bulldozers, cherry pickers, 24-hour patrols, and cost an estimated \$456,000 over several weeks.<sup>6</sup> Despite all of this the protesters kept the road physically impassable for 10 whole days and conducted a continuous presence in the forest throughout the dispute until the Court finally stopped work by granting an injunction on the 9th of August, 1991.<sup>7</sup>

The political fallout was dramatic. As a direct result of the Chaelundi conflict, tensions erupted within the State Government that led to the resignation of the Education Minister, Terry Metherill from the governing Liberal Party, and to the government being relegated to a minority position on the floor of parliament. This in turn facilitated the enactment of ground-breaking endangered species legislation, against the wishes of the now-minority Liberal government. The *Endangered Species (Interim Protection) Act 1991*, introduced as a private members bill and drafted principally by John Corkill of NEFA and his legal counsel, was passed into law in the closing session of the NSW parliament in 1991.<sup>8</sup> The cultural impact on the

North Coast was also immense, the NEFA tribe had formed alliances cemented in the camaraderie of conflict and energised by the victory. The old-growth campaign and NEFA emerged by the end of 1991 as a serious threat to both the timber industry of the region and to the conservative government as a whole.

The government and the timber industry staged a fight-back campaign in the early months of 1992. It was a concerted media and political campaign in which NEFA's gains of the previous year were portrayed as an immediate threat, not only to employment and the future of the timber industry as a whole, but to a vast range of activities. According to the industry, these would now be banned under the new endangered species legislation. The government and the timber industry publicly claimed potential job losses of between 100 and 2,000 as a direct result of NEFA's wins in the previous year.<sup>9</sup> The industry's campaign led to the passage of special legislation entitled the *Timber Industry (Interim Protection) Act 1992*. The Act was a partial win for the industry and the Forestry Commission, but the jubilation was short-lived. The circumstances of the passage of the legislation, in particular, involved alleged inducements offered to secure the vote of the newly independent Terry Metherill, which led to a highly publicised investigation by the Independent Commission Against Corruption<sup>10</sup> and to the eventual forced resignation of the Premier, Nick Greiner.

## 1992 'Direct Action all the Way'

The year 1992 represented a critical phase in the old-growth campaign. With no election due until 1995, the government had a chance to take on NEFA and advance its old-growth logging agenda.

This was the way 1992 was, it was the middle of the government's term, they were getting desperate to break the back of the forests issue, and we were running hard, ready for any fight, any number of arrests. There were no elections coming up, few avenues for delay left through the courts, so it just had to be direct action all the way.<sup>11</sup>

On the 1st of April, 1992, the first anniversary of the establishment of the Chaelundi blockade, NEFA blockaded the Mt Killiekrankie area of Oakes State Forest, near Bellingen. The Killiekrankie blockade successfully stopped the logging operation there and resulted in a successful prosecution of the Forestry Commission (at NEFA's initiation) by the Environment Protection Authority, for polluting the headwaters of the Bellinger river.<sup>12</sup>

From Killiekrankie, NEFA moved into the Mummel Gulf near Walcha and commenced a blockade in early May until an eventual back-down by the Forestry Commission towards the end of June. Once it became apparent that NEFA could



hold onto Mummel Forest, scouts were sent to detect other old-growth logging sites, with the aim of setting up further blockades.

At the time NEFA was well ensconced in the Mummel Gulf, which was a really strong blockade. We were on a roll, the government didn't want to tackle us after the drubbing we'd given them at Chaelundi and at Killiekrankie. At Mummel, we'd actually taken over a closed forest and no attempt was made to get us out... We were running scouting missions in the southern part of NEFA's range, we sent a 'reccy' (reconnaissance) crew up to the Carrai plateau near Kempsey, they were trashing the last pockets of the plateau, classic stuff for endangered species... We took a crew from Mummel and set up a blockade at Carrai, we captured the logging equipment inside the compartment with tripods.<sup>13</sup>

One of the keys to NEFA's ability to outmanoeuvre the government was the high level of expertise it had gained in the use of two-way radio communication. During the Chaelundi campaign NEFA had succeeded in setting up a radio network which permitted communication between the blockade and a base station over 200km away. At the base station, high quality radio-telephone patches had made it possible for blockaders to conduct interviews with Sydney radio stations whilst locked onto machinery, and to communicate directly with NEFA's crew at the Land and Environment Court. On the day that the injunction was granted to stop the logging in Chaelundi, the court's decision was conveyed to the blockaders within 15 minutes, while it took the police a full eight hours to get the same message to personnel on the ground at the blockade site.

After Chaelundi the whole system went on the road. Blockading continued almost non-stop throughout 1992 and the communications network had to keep up with each new site and even 'scouting operations'. At one stage we had three blockades in different parts of the state all linked through our network. We had an extensive internal and external set-up at the Mummel Gulf near Walcha, and that was linked back to the base station near Lismore with another link out to Carrai near Kempsey and the first Wild Cattle Creek blockade was happening near Dorrigo at the same time. Each of the three camps could communicate with each other simultaneously, so we had the capacity to respond quickly to any new situations.<sup>14</sup>

## NEFA and the Bundjalung Nation Get Down to Business

Whilst avoiding direct confrontation with NEFA in the forests, the government was working on a new legislative package that would completely change natural resource management in NSW. The Natural Resources Management Bill was a package of legislation that the government clearly hoped would be the 'final solution' to the forest issue. It proposed sweeping changes to the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*, the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* and the *Heritage Act*

*Fig 7.1: Green Extremists, 1993.*

(© NEFA)

1977 – in short, all the pieces of legislation that NEFA had successfully used against the government in court. This package represented an endgame and NEFA determined to block it.

NEFA activists in Lismore had made new allies in the Far North Coast Regional Aboriginal Land Council, through work they had done together in relation to Forestry Environmental Impact Statements in that area. The proposed legislative package threatened the interests of environmentalists and Indigenous people alike, and became the catalyst for an historic alliance to oppose the Bill. At weekend camps in nearby forests, the 'Bundjalung Alliance' came into being.

The then-Chairman of the Regional Land Council, Mr John Roberts, liaised with the elders of the Bundjalung Nation and obtained support for a coordinated effort to oppose the government's sweeping legislative package. To raise funds and awareness, NEFA and the Bundjalung Alliance held a festival at Nimbin Rocks, a site of significance to local Indigenous people. Together, NEFA and representatives of the Regional Land Council swapped stories and intelligence and readied themselves for a showdown at the NSW Parliament the following month.

On the day that the new legislative package was due to be presented to the parliament, a rally of environmentalists assembled at the front of Parliament House. Whilst the watchful eyes of parliamentary security remained fixed on the rally out the front, NEFA and the Bundjalung Alliance assembled a tent embassy behind the

parliament in the domain, in full view of the parliamentary offices and dining area. The tents were erected so quickly that by the time security could react, the embassy was in place, complete with a four-metre Aboriginal flag supplied by the NSW Aboriginal Land Council and a 2.5-metre NEFA banner. The aim was to stay in place until the package was dropped. The government had the good sense not only to issue a permit for the embassy to remain, but by 11.00am that morning it was announced that the entire legislative package had been dropped. The Natural Resources Management package never resurfaced.

In the weeks leading up to NEFA and the Bundjalung Alliance arriving in Sydney, there had been somewhat condescending speculation in the media about the 'hill tribes' from the north. Following the withdrawal of the Bill, the embassy was dismantled, and many people returned home, but NEFA's core blockaders regrouped at a camp at Mrs Macquarie's Chair to plan their next action. In the days that followed, the Sydney media had their opportunity to see the 'hill tribes' in action.

## Forestry Siege

Simply defeating the legislative package wasn't enough to pacify NEFA:

The final chapter to 1992, was our storming of the headquarters of the NSW Forestry Commission. It had been the hardest fought, most frantic and probably most important year of the NSW old-growth struggle. NEFA had brought the hill tribes to Sydney and we were as angry as hell after a year in the forests and wanted Sydney to feel the battle that was going on out there. We decided that we would take over the Forestry Commission headquarters at Pennant Hills. This was no 1960's-style 'sit in' that we had planned, rather it was a cross between a siege and a bloodless coup.

We conducted reconnaissance on the building on the days leading up to the planned action. One guy who worked with the Department of Health at the time took in one of our most reliable feral warriors, Rodney. Rodney cut all his dreadlocks off for the operation. They wore white coats, Health Department tags, the whole bit, and inspected as much of the building as they could. From these operations we had the floor plan and internal system well worked out. We also watched from outside and worked out that at a certain time – 17 minutes past seven to be precise – you didn't need the electric card to enter, as the security grill in the car park went up, and a single guard was in place with the boomgate down. We decided that that time had to be the optimum time to hit the building.

All we had to do then was get 30 or more ferals, greenies, anarchists or whatever to all appear in Pennant Hills at 5.00 in the morning and somehow not attract attention, and enter this building at 7.22.

Quite magically we all got to the right place at the right time, took up our respective positions, loaded up the cars and it all happened. It was 7.20, and this morning the boomgate in the car park wasn't even closed so we just drove two overfull cars, a van, and appropriately enough a Landrover troop carrier, straight down the ramp and into the underground carpark. The plans were perfect. It went like clockwork. People went straight for the lifts, took them to the sixth floor (the executive suite), and the rooftop as arranged then blocked them open with pot plants so no one could follow. Someone had brought along ingenious homemade wrought iron devices which could hold the fire escape doors secured from inside. This then locked the whole building.

I was on the sixth floor, others had reached the roof and abseiled down the side of the building hanging a massive banner reading 'Under New Management' from the side of the building.

We had succeeded not only in occupying the building, but effectively locking out the whole of the Forestry Commission and the police and so began our media offensive, assisted by the state-of-the-art fax machines in the Forestry Commissioner's private suite.<sup>15</sup>



The whole concept was that of a coup, where the old corrupt Forestry Commission was ousted by a popular uprising, and we were the interim administration, the Peoples Commission for the Forest. We had pre-prepared press releases detailing the coup and had prepared a new Forestry Charter which was immediately faxed out on the Commissioner's group-dial fax to all district and regional offices (with the Commissioner's official fax header), detailing their responsibilities under the new regime.

Within half-an-hour, Sydney media had gone into an absolute feeding frenzy, there were helicopters overhead, and people's wives were ringing in to seek reassurance that their husbands were safe or asking whether what they were hearing on the radio was really true. I had one woman ring and I reassured her that her husband was perfectly safe: 'There'd just been a bloodless coup,' I explained, 'but it's all sorted out now and working under a new administration.' She seemed quite happy, saying: 'Oh all right then, thank you.'

We were in the building for about five hours all up before the police could chop their way in. The view from Hans Dreilisma's (the Commissioner) office was excellent. There were fire engines, hosts of police and media, scuffles between police and forestry officials as angry forestry staff harassed protesters outside. We expected the police to bash the doors in eventually. At times we feared a full violent Tactical Response Group raid.

The parliament went into uproar that day, with National Party members calling us terrorists and the minister banning the Forestry Commission from having any further contact with us. We were arrested and let out on bail to face the media chorus.<sup>16</sup>

## The Industry Sets a Trap for NEFA

Following the occupation of the Forestry building in November 1992, the State Government issued an edict effectively blacklisting NEFA as a group from any further interaction with the Forestry Commission or any representation on state government bodies. Certainly the action was audacious and many people in the more mainstream environment movement in Sydney sought to distance themselves from NEFA at that time. The timber industry and the Forestry Commission clearly believed NEFA had gone too far and that perhaps the time was right to break the Alliance. By May 1993, the timber industry and the Forestry Commission had developed a counter-strategy that involved an attempt to personally sue more than 30 NEFA activists and to seek injunctions in the Supreme Court to prevent them from organising further blockades. The pre-planning was evident. An old-growth logging operation at Dingo State Forest near Wingham was opposed by NEFA, and the Forestry Commission formally closed the surrounding area of over 100 square kilometres. Forestry Commission personnel were on site when blockaders arrived, and systematically photographed and videoed all new arrivals as evidence for the planned Supreme Court suit.

The Forestry Commission commenced proceedings against 32 named defendants, seeking orders to restrain these persons from entering the forest area, and to restrain them from encouraging others to do so as well as an order for substantial costs. The Forestry Commission ultimately failed to obtain the injunctions and costs sought, partly because they seemed to believe that the mere sight of NEFA protesters on video would be enough to convince the Supreme Court to take decisive action. Ironically the Supreme Court refused the application, holding that:

...it is the task of the plaintiff and the police to enforce the forestry regulation, and of the police to deal with breaches of the law; it is not the task of the court to do so by injunction until the front line method has been shown to be ineffective... That situation has not been reached.<sup>17</sup>

The Forestry Commission had failed to convince the Court that the combined forces the NSW Police Service and the Forestry Commission were incapable of containing NEFA. At the same time, NEFA managed to penetrate the closed forest and lock down three working bulldozers in a single day, while the police were held up at the public blockade at the front gate.

## Negotiating a Political Solution

Blockades continued throughout 1993 and 1994, at Toonumbah (near Kyogle) and at Wild Cattle Creek, among others. In the lead-up to the 1995 state election,

NEFA embarked upon a campaign of hit-and-run blockades throughout northern NSW forests, with the aim of raising the temperature further. The election was close, giving a bare majority to the Labor Party. The incoming Carr Labor government, obviously wary of the fate of the Greiner government, promised to create substantial new national parks and defer old-growth logging until a comprehensive regional assessment was completed.

The government initiated a consultative process involving the timber industry, NEFA, representatives of government agencies and the scientific community, aimed at achieving a scientifically credible resolution to the old-growth forest dispute. While this process represented a fruitful end-game for NEFA, it also involved substantial risks. There was no guarantee that the government would abide by the scientific outcomes of the process and NEFA risked losing grass-roots support by working so closely with the government. As the process ran its course, two things became clear: firstly, that the scientific assessment process would vindicate the credibility of NEFA's arguments during the preceding 10 years; and secondly, that the government and the timber industry would never be prepared to accept full implementation of the scientific recommendations.

The government reneged on full implementation and made a political compromise that left some significant old-growth stands unprotected. NEFA resigned from the process before its completion and returned to the forest to continue the fight for those areas that had been left out. This fight continues to the present day. Despite the frustrations of the political process, NEFA had made some very significant gains. Dailan Pugh (affectionately known within NEFA as 'Field Marshal Pugh') calculated that despite the setbacks, NEFA had managed to have 160 hectares of forest transferred into reserves for each single day that the Alliance had campaigned from 1989 through to 1999.

In the process of building the alliance, of raising awareness and funds for its campaign, and of conducting such extensive direct action campaigns over so many years, it is inevitable that NEFA had to both utilise and stimulate the social and cultural aspects of life in the region that were so essential to the success of its campaign. The remainder of this chapter explores the complexity of NEFA's role in the social and cultural life of the region.

## Social and Cultural Aspects of the NEFA Experience

Whilst the success of NEFA owed much to the established alternative lifestyle communities of the North Coast, NEFA's campaign also acted to revitalise existing communities and to promote both cross pollenisation of existing communities and the formation of new ones. NEFA's campaign travelled to forests and supportive intentional communities from Elands (near Wingham) in the south to Toonumbah

*Fig 7.2: Blockade, Dingo State Forest, 1993.*



(© NEFA)

*Fig 7.3: NEFA activists tackle working 'dozer, Dingo State Forest, 1993.*



(© NEFA)

*Fig 7.4: Green Extremist being locked on to captured 'dozer, Dingo State Forest, 1993..*



(© NEFA)

*Fig 7.5: Capture of moving 'dozer, Dingo State Forest, 1993.*



(© NEFA)



in the north, and linked numerous communities that would otherwise have had little or no contact with each other.

By the late 1980s, new intentional communities were being established in places such as Toonumbah and Pillar Valley, and Nymboida near Grafton. Toonumbah was settled in 1988 by a group that had first met at the Daintree blockade site in far north Queensland in the mid-1980s. The Toonumbah community both contributed to and benefited from its association with NEFA throughout the 1990s, gathering sufficient new community members from among the ranks of NEFA activists to be able to purchase a 600-acre farm in the Toonumbah valley by 1994. This newly acquired farm became the site of NEFA's Toonumbah Forest Festival in 1994, which was attended by over 1,000 people. As well as raising substantial funds for NEFA, the festival helped raise the profile of the forests of the area. The Toonumbah National Park was proclaimed the following year, and included several of the logging compartments that had been threatened at the time of the festival.

One Toonumbah resident observed the impact of NEFA in the community as follows:

The process of meeting new people at blockades and introducing them to existing communities re-energised both the social life of communities as well as renewing the political focus and vigour of communities. Communities like Toonumbah and Nymboida and Elands end up becoming virtual remote environment centres in themselves, setting up solar-powered offices complete with fax machines, computers, printers, the whole lot. So effectively the communities become politically as well as physically self-reliant. They change from just farming and housing survivalism to be that as well as communities of political resistance.<sup>18</sup>

Whilst existing communities tended to remain fairly private, NEFA on the other hand was an extremely public affair, recruiting at north coast markets, environment centres and festivals, and highly visible in the local media. For new arrivals, NEFA provided a readily available point of entry to the more established north coast alternative culture. Furthermore, NEFA was dynamic, political and exciting. NEFA was new, and so informal that it was able to change to reflect its 'membership', for young people becoming involved in NEFA required very little compromise of personal values and ideals. In this way NEFA was able to provide a conduit, through which significant new migration that swelled and re-invigorated the alternative movement was able to take place. With the influx of new people came new influences and attitudes.

## Integration of Post-Punk and Post-Aquarius Subcultures

Since the time of the Nightcap battle in the late 1970s, a new generation had become attracted to northern NSW, a generation that had been too young to

remember the days of the Aquarius festival. It brought a freshness and a questioning of what could be classified as 'hippie' ideals. Young people growing up in the cities during this time had been exposed to the punk and new-wave music and culture of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Despite its reputation for nihilism, the punk and post-punk movement in Australia – and indeed in the UK and USA – contained elements of serious political comment. Bands like The Clash, The Smiths and Crass in the UK, and The Dead Kennedys in the USA, had given punk a distinctly outward-looking political orientation. Many punk bands actively promoted a serious and sophisticated anarchist politics. By the mid-1980s, inner-city sub-cultural communities in the capital cities displayed cultural features that fused aspects of the previous hippie movement (organic food co-ops, communal living, political activism) with the punk version of the anarchist intellectual tradition (inner-city collectives, squats and confrontational politics).

In Melbourne, this was exemplified by the culturally diverse squatter's movement and the Squatters Union, which by 1987 operated a café in squatted premises at Port Melbourne and was engaged in ongoing confrontation with local authorities over their occupation of vacant premises. In Sydney punk-anarchist collectives also operated, such as the Jellyheads co-op in Surry Hills. Similarly, the violence of the Bjelke-Petersen regime in Queensland had forced numerous battle-hardened street activists into northern NSW by the end of the 1980s.

A telling indication of the self-conscious and slightly irreverent attitude of this new generation of activists towards the ideals of the hippie movement (to which it was so clearly indebted) can be found in the standard group signature attached to NEFA internal memoranda throughout the 1990s, and still in use to this day. The words 'Om Gaia Dudes' appearing at the foot of meeting notices, blockade alerts and festival flyers generated by NEFA represents – a complex mixture of the sacred with a sense of intentional self-parody. The signature first appeared as 'Om Gaia: the Forest and the People are One' in 1992, being a reference to both the sacred syllable of Buddhist meditation, and the concept of the Earth as a living organism, known as Gaia. Slightly embarrassed by such serious spirituality, NEFA activists soon shortened the signature and added the word 'dudes', the latter being derived from the great Bart Simpson. Bart had already had a blockade named after him during the Chaelundi campaign, known as 'Bart Pipes', which featured a painting of Bart with a speech balloon saying 'Fuck off loggers'.

The reluctance of the new generation of activists to uncritically adopt some of the more restrictive truisms of the hippie generation – such as vegetarianism or embarrassment at the use of four wheel drives, chainsaws or military terminology – became a strength. NEFA was not going to be hamstrung by an overly precious adherence to 'hippie ideals'. For the post-punk generation, saving the forests was a battle, and to a large extent the end justified the means.

The following excerpt from Ian Cohen's autobiography *Green Fire* describes his impressions of the new generation of activists:

The Chaelundi blockade represented a dynamic combination of old-guard Green activists, locals and new protesters, with the keenness of youth. Included in the latter group were the 'punks for the forest', a wonderfully rare breed of wild young men and women, outrageous to the extreme, who shocked everyone from police to protesters. Wild and often drunk, they have surprised everyone with their outlandish humour and bravery. Under the rough exterior of rags and skull earrings, nose-rings, boots and beer, are some of the finest most honest people that I have encountered (when they were sober).<sup>19</sup>

### **Direct Action: The Path of the Non-Violent Guerilla**

As countless generations of guerillas had discovered before them, the forces of organised authority are at a disadvantage in remote and difficult terrain. NEFA's specific style of non-violent direct action gave it a reputation for extremism, a view held not only by the State Government and the timber industry, but also by other, more conservative environmental groups in NSW. One of the reasons for the formation of a strictly northern NSW-based forest alliance in the first place had been disagreement with the city-based Wilderness Society over tactics, strategy and meeting procedures. 'Non-violent action' (NVA) had become a highly contested term within the environmental movement by the late 1980s. NEFA chose to add the word 'direct' to distinguish its techniques from the concept of NVA that had gained some influence in southern NSW and Victorian forest campaigns. To the purists, NVA required tactics of entirely passive disobedience, highly formal processes of group decision-making, and cooperation with police; any form of secrecy, or covert actions were viewed as falling under the rubicon of 'violence'.

NEFA rejected the political correctness of this view of non-violence, preferring instead to pursue a vision of non-violence that was also 'direct', in the sense that it was specifically targeted towards producing actual physical outcomes that would prevent or delay logging. This was done by physically blockading roads and entrances, locking onto machinery and generally operating a non-violent, yet guerilla-style campaign in the forests. For NEFA, forest actions were not merely symbolic actions to attract media coverage – they were serious physical actions designed to actually stop a logging operation. Ironically, it was this feature of NEFA's blockades that sustained media interest the most. What was stridently non-violent about NEFA's code however was that the use of personal violence, or the destruction of other people's property, was not considered acceptable. Provided these minimum restraints were observed, NEFA activists were free to pursue strategies of their choosing. Frequently, when a particular action was suggested at a meeting, the

individuals keen to participate would then break off into an 'affinity group' to organise the details. In this way, meeting time was kept at a minimum and the affinity group was not hamstrung by unwieldy and centralised group processes.

Typically, NEFA's blockades consisted of physical installations in which protesters risked personal injury or death in order to impede the access of earthmoving equipment into contested forest areas. A sophisticated catalogue of these devices is available on NEFA's website, entitled 'The Intercontinental Deluxe Guide To Blockading'.<sup>20</sup> The guide includes descriptions of construction, materials, uses, and advantages and disadvantages of the various kinds of blockade technology. The common names of blockade devices include: tripods, tripod/bipods, vertical pipes, dragons and sleeping dragons, lock-ons, monopoles, and cantilevers. In addition, there were techniques described such as scrubbing, and black wallaby.<sup>21</sup>

The development of new jargon was a natural outcome of several factors: the novelty of blockades (names just didn't previously exist for many blockade devices); the essential unlawfulness of blockading and the need for confidentiality; and, to some extent, the development of group identity. The need to communicate over two-way radio also generated a vast array of call signs, code words and short-hand terms that then entered the vernacular of the participants. Semi-militaristic terms were common – NEFA's media nerve-centre and store of hardware in Lismore was always referred to simply as 'the bunker', and the act of climbing on to a tripod was referred to as 'flying' the tripod. Those who intentionally placed themselves in arrestable situations attached to blockade devices were somewhat humorously referred to as 'bunnies', while specific actions at forestry offices or particular log dumps were often referred to as 'hit ups'.

Despite the non-violent nature of NEFA's tactics, the timber industry lobbyists repeatedly alluded to the 'violent' nature of forest blockades. A flurry of media releases from the Forests Products Association (FPA) during the Chaelundi campaign, for example, identified 'law and order' as one of the real priorities in the dispute.<sup>22</sup> It described the protesters' actions as 'acts of anarchy' and even alluded in a mystifying fashion to the 'real political agenda of these extreme elements of our society who hang on the back of alleged environmental issues'.<sup>23</sup>

It was true that NEFA had gained a reputation as an uncompromising, efficient and highly successful operation. By the mid-1990s, NEFA was conducting training workshops for other activist groups and student organisations as well as providing assistance to blockades in other parts of the country.

NEFA activists are recognised as some of the most skilled in the country and have [also] been involved in planning actions in Sydney against freeway extensions, as well as Stradbroke Island sand mining [Queensland], East Gippsland logging [Victoria] and the Tarkine logging/roading [Tasmania], to name a few.<sup>24</sup>

Direct Action proved to be a very effective political tool, especially when integrated with a well-thought-out political and media strategy. Blockades were colourful, controversial and evoked strong responses from the public. They brought with them a sense of rebellion and excitement that attracted the very kind of people the movement most needed to go forward.

The power of direct action should not be underestimated. Direct Action provokes rebellion, creates cohesion and often changes the values and philosophy of the participants.<sup>25</sup>

### From 'Punk' to 'Feral'

They [the punks of the forest] helped spawn a subculture who became known as 'the ferals' of the forest, which helped set the tone for a series of blockades that NEFA was involved in throughout the 1990s.<sup>26</sup>

The use of the word 'feral' to describe the mostly nomadic (homeless) young people who regularly attended, supported, and often provided the continuous human face of NEFA's blockades, began during the 1991 Chaelundi campaign. The occupation of the Chaelundi Free State during the winter of 1991 saw many people camped in the forest, with scant or no camping gear, and limited access to water. It was almost unavoidable that a certain degree of 'feralness' would accompany such a lifestyle. The term 'feral' became, during the Chaelundi campaign, not a derogatory term, but a term of pride.

There were three sets of pipe bollards established along Broadmeadows Road, several kilometres apart, and a separate camp of blockaders was established deep inside the occupied zone and was referred to as 'Feral Camp'. There were cultural differences that influenced a person's choice to stay at Feral Camp, or at 'the front gate'. Life at the front gate involved being on the front line, the public face of the blockade; it meant interaction with police, the general public, the media and new arrivals to the blockade. The front gate was the most populous camp and also the most well appointed – there was vehicle access, so water, food and other supplies could be delivered. It was easier for people who chose to live in tents, and most of all it suited those members of the Alliance who saw themselves as ambassadors or 'talking heads', as they were more commonly known within NEFA. Feral Camp, on the other hand, had a more adventurous and romantic character, something akin to a bushranger's camp. A concealed encampment with no vehicle access and extremely rudimentary facilities, it was usually occupied by longer-term blockaders. Feral Camp gave people a chance to live on the edge in a close knit group, beyond the reach of media cameras and curious visitors, and even to avoid some of the more

formal 'politics' of life at the front gate. It developed as a subculture within a subculture.

In fact, the existence of Feral Camp and the separate cultural identity that developed there was just another aspect of the pluralism that made NEFA such an effective political network. The timber industry and elements of the media were always keen to portray images of blockaders as weird, socially undesirable outcasts, and NEFA's media campaign sought, as much as possible, to portray NEFA's most socially acceptable face. Furthermore, some people were naturally more attracted to public roles, to media and political work, and to the greater emphasis on group meetings and procedures that went with that line of work. Feral Camp provided a meeting-free zone, a media-free zone, a place where bushcraft was paramount and where the wild spirit could be unleashed in an uncommonly unrestrained atmosphere. Feral Camp provided a useful pressure valve socially. People were able to choose which cultural group to associate with, and while there were no rigid separations, it clearly prevented minor differences of approach becoming a threat to the unity of the campaign as a whole.

The self-identification of a part of NEFA's network as 'ferals' began in Chaelundi, but became a theme that continued through all of NEFA's campaigns during the 1990s. The ferals consisted in the main of young people who had chosen not just a rural but a specifically forest-based lifestyle. The phenomenon grew and grew, and whilst it was not necessarily a NEFA-only phenomena, the feral subculture of the Far North Coast became so identifiable by the mid 1990s that the term was regularly employed in newspaper and magazine articles and letters to the editor and, ultimately, the phenomena itself became the subject of several high profile documentaries by 1995.<sup>27</sup> NEFA's blockades provided a physical and cultural focal point for the growing feral subculture – not only as locations for the gathering of these mostly homeless people, but as an entirely consistent rationale for living in the best patches of old-growth in the region. Quite simply, the feral lifestyle in the old-growth forest involved a symbiosis between the forest itself (which was threatened with destruction) and the inhabitant (who was there to protect it). This symbiosis provided a real intellectual and spiritual sense of belonging.

Whilst the NEFA network consisted of people of all ages and backgrounds, frequently people with homes, children and jobs were simply unable to stay permanently at blockade sites. The ferals (who often deliberately chose life outside the built environment) on the other hand, became the human backbone of the blockades, particularly where long stays were required. The advantage to NEFA was that blockades could be relied upon to be sustained over weeks, even months if need be, and the forest industry was deprived of the tactic of simply waiting NEFA out.

The identity of the feral subculture developed over time. Whilst in the early days in Chaelundi there was no particular dress code or hairstyle associated with the culture, other than very warm, heavily soiled, and probably torn clothing, By the mid to late 1990s, the feral subculture was readily identifiable by dreadlocks, dark clothing, and body piercing, especially with forest products such as bones, quills and sticks. These fashion developments borrowed heavily from post-punk urban culture were adapted into a more earthy style. NEFA's symbiotic relationship with the emerging feral subculture extended beyond the forest however and was enmeshed with the wider artistic and musical scene on the North Coast at the time.

### Music for the Revolution

Whilst NEFA's blockades provided a political context and a physical location for the feral subculture, NEFA's benefit gigs and festivals provided a venue for its social, musical and artistic expression. NEFA's benefit gigs contributed to the artistic and musical life of the region but they also served other practical purposes for the Alliance. They provided a means for generating funds for the campaign, as well as serving the social role of bringing supporters together, and creating a venue for spreading campaign material and ideas. Above all, they promoted the idea that being a part of NEFA was a fun, vibrant experience. The income generation at the gigs came not so much from door entry prices, which were extremely low, but from NEFA's catering collective known as the Liberation Café.

The relationship between NEFA's campaigns and social events and the evolution of a distinctly North Coast post punk musical genre is exemplified by the history of the band Ragadoll and its songwriter, Jimmy Willing. The band began as a punk band in the early 1980s in Sydney, sharing the stage with bands such as The Dead Kennedys, Beasts of Bourbon, The Scientists and The Gun Club. By the late 1980s, Willing had headed north and had become established in northern NSW and played a seminal role in the development of a distinctively 'feral' form of art and music. As well as the band Ragadoll, Willing operated a travelling puppet theatre known as the Von Tramp Family Puppets. The puppets, featuring the notorious Satan, performed at the Chaelundi blockade in 1991 and added a theatrical tone to other NEFA protests, including the annual general meeting of the multinational logging giant BORAL in Sydney in 1994. Together with Ragadoll, the puppet show became a regular feature at NEFA benefit concerts throughout the 1990s, and Jimmy Willing and the various musicians in Ragadoll formed an axis around which a thriving 'feral' music scene revolved. A cultural and financial symbiosis soon developed between NEFA and various North Coast bands, who played at the increasingly popular NEFA regional benefit gigs.

NEFA's main source of fundraising is through benefit gigs and festivals. It has established a good relationship with many north coast bands and performers who are happy to support its work by performing for free. There is a high percentage of musicians amongst its ranks and I believe it has had a cultural influence as well as a political one in the region. By putting on acts that may not be getting many other gigs, it performs an associated development role. A typical NEFA gig might include several acoustic acts, a couple of heavy rock/garage punk bands, fire twirlers, circus or street performers and a couple of DJs.<sup>28</sup>

The collateral role of NEFA's campaign in stimulating musical expression and providing a context for artistic development on the North Coast was also evident in a number of compilations produced during the 1990s that featured various regional musicians. These included the garage/punk/feral compilation *MO*, produced by Willing's label, Rumble Records in 1997, and the compilation of forest-related protest songs, *Lock On*, produced in 1999.<sup>29</sup>

## Integration of Subcultures

NEFA was also very socially diverse – ferals, university educated professional activists, lawyers, scientists, people of all ages, and there was a role for everyone.<sup>30</sup>

Whilst NEFA is most famous for its blockades, the Alliance could never have been successful without the contribution of people highly skilled in media, legal and scientific disciplines. John Corkill was central among NEFA's intelligentsia, being the official applicant in over eight court challenges brought by the Alliance to dispute the lawfulness of old-growth logging in NSW. Mostly situated in Sydney, Corkill was a key figure in terms of keeping the Alliance's pulse on the parliament, the courts and the agencies in Sydney. He was not alone, supported by a network of experienced and skilled activists all the way up the NSW coast. Another indispensable member of Alliance was Dailan Pugh, who brought to NEFA a rigorous scientific approach to research, coupled with unparalleled field knowledge of the North Coast forests.

The Alliance was able to productively blend groups and individuals who would normally be expected to regard each other with a high degree of suspicion. NEFA meetings were a place where ferals from the forest, lawyers from Sydney, qualified ecologists and office-based 'professional environmentalists' were required to both listen and contribute views on the campaign direction. Each group had expertise, which the others had learnt to respect. This kind of interaction, and the social play that followed, was able to break down pre-existing barriers, lubricated always by a strong sense of common purpose. The holistic nature of NEFA as a political organisation, as a tribe and as a social phenomena is well expressed in the following passage by a NEFA activist who describes himself as a 'lowly kitchen hand'.



I worked the kitchen, it was just like what I'd done in town with punks. I realised that NEFA actually had substantial bills for phones, faxes etc and I could help by cooking for income. I came to realise that NEFA was really schizophrenic, having really wild fire-twirling ferrets at one end to really full on revolutionary academic theorists, media spokespeople, lawyers and lobbyists, well-meaning bourgeois people who'd left the rat race at the other. All these different facets could work together and try to stop old-growth logging. The love was amazing, quite apart from the ideological or political alliance, it was a real spiritual experience.

I do my bit by providing people with the yummiest food I can, so they can build tripods, fly blockades, do media stunts, talk intelligently in front of cameras, or spend hours doing research or whatever. I get to be a lowly kitchen hand and contribute to the whole thing.

Cooking is also the best way NEFA has of raising money. Hire a hall and a few bands, buy some food and have a gig, make a bit at the door and three times as much at the kitchen

You can throw away your theoretical anarchy and deal with the practical grassroots chaos. The butterfly flaps its wings, the food is cooked, the tripods go up and the forest gets saved.<sup>31</sup>

## Conclusion

Whilst NEFA never set out to be a cultural phenomenon, the sheer scale of the old-growth forest campaign and the demographic context within which it took place meant that the cultural and political aspects of the campaign would never be able to be separated. NEFA's inclusiveness and tribalism and its underlying anarchist ethos meant that it was able to bring together a diverse range of individuals and cultural influences, and harness them for its political campaign as well as make a significant contribution to the cultural life of the region.

The lasting impacts of NEFA's old-growth campaign range from the more obvious, such as the proliferation of forest reserves in north-eastern NSW, the binding precedents set in the Land and Environment Court, and the modern statutory framework for the protection of endangered species in NSW, through to far more subtle influences upon the demography, culture and politics of the region. Naturally NEFA has been both a product of and an influence upon local cultural development, but NEFA has made a lasting cultural contribution to the region in a number of significant ways.

NEFA's campaign was able to strengthen the existing intentional communities and facilitate the formation of new ones by linking together various communities dispersed throughout the region and by introducing new recruits. Furthermore

NEFA provided a context within which a new generation was able to find a purpose and voice in the region politically and socially and to develop new ideas and forms of expression. Much of NEFA's cultural contribution has been collateral to the old-growth forest campaign itself. NEFA's pluralism helped to foster respect and cooperation between people of different backgrounds and outlooks, and provided a context within which a colourful new subculture was able to define itself whilst at the same time become integrated within a wider community and political objective. NEFA's fundraising activities such as festivals and benefit gigs provided a context for artistic and musical expression which helped promote both environmental protest music and 'feral cabaret' as distinctive features of north coast music and art.

One of the most enduring contributions of NEFA's old-growth forest campaign has been the promotion of a culture of political activism in the region. Thousands of people have attended NEFA's blockades, meetings, and festivals and these experiences have built social and political networks and enhanced the political skills of the participants. NEFA activists have also directly passed on skills through formal training workshops, publications and web based information and NEFA has at times sent specialists to assist blockades in other parts of the country including Southern QLD, Sydney and Western Australia. Activist training modules originally prepared by NEFA are currently being updated to become base materials for an accredited activist training course to be taught by the School of Law and Justice at Southern Cross University in 2003.

The value to the social movements of having a ready supply of experienced and skilled activists in the region can be measured by the success of subsequent direct action campaigns such as those opposing the Timbarra gold mine near Tenterfield and the opposition to the Patersons Hill development near Byron Bay in 1999, as well as by the successes of the region's environment movement in local politics. Several former NEFA activists have been elected to local councils, and Ian Cohen, a former NEFA activist, has served as the Greens Party MLC in the States Upper House since 1995. John Corkill almost doubled the Greens vote in the state seat of Lismore when he stood in 1999 to nearly 10%, which is an indication of a continuing high level of support for the deep green side of north coast politics.

Whilst the Aquarius festival in 1973 is popularly acknowledged as a starting point for the influx of new settlers to the region, the old-growth campaign has provided evidence of the maturity, self confidence and cultural flexibility of that ongoing social experiment. For people who may have had little if anything to do with the area in the 1970s, NEFA's old-growth campaign has served to provide a sense of belonging and a sense of place in local history for a whole second wave of new settlers.

Despite NEFA's successes, old-growth logging still continues and so do the blockades. The story never really ends, but, for forest activists, at least there will be an answer when the grandchildren ask them what they did when the old-growth forests were being logged. The relationship between the forests and the people who live in and around them will continue to evolve and the tall old-growth forests of northern New South Wales will continue to carry with them a sense of place and of belonging as old as Gondwanaland itself.

## Postscript

The contribution of John Corkill and Dailan Pugh to environmental activism has subsequently been recognised with an Order of Australia medal, awarded in 2003. In accepting the awards, John and Dailan issued a joint statement that acknowledged 'the thousands of committed forest protestors and supporters who have worked together as the North East Forest Alliance, over the past 14 years'. The awards were considered vindication of NEFA's stance of non-violent opposition to logging and roadworks in old-growth forests, rainforests, the habitats of threatened species, and other high conservation areas.

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## About the Author

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## Notes

1. Author interview with Samantha Wilcox, Information Officer, Big Scrub Environment Centre (1991–1993), Lismore, October 1995.
2. Author interviews with Andrew Kilvert, Journalist and NEFA activist, and quoted in Nicole Rogers, 1998, p163.
3. Andrew Parkes, 2000, p1.
4. Author interview with Sue Higginson, October 1995.
5. Nicole Rogers, 1998, p149.
6. Quote by NSW Police Minister, *Legislative Assembly (Hansard)*, 23 October 1991, in Tim Bonyhady, 1993, p102.
7. See *Corkill v Forestry Commission* (1991) 73 LGRA 126.
8. Tim Bonyhady, 1993, p99.

9. Ditto, p100.
10. Independent Commission Against Corruption, 1992; see also discussion in Tim Bonyhady, 1993, pp100–103.
11. Personal communication with Tim Somerville and quoted in Nicole Rogers, 1998, p169.
12. Nicole Rogers, 1994, p10.
13. Author interviews with Tim Somerville and quoted in Nicole Rogers, 1998, p169.
14. Author interviews with Feral Radio's Terry Placing, quoted in Nicole Rogers, 1998, p170.
15. Author interviews with Tim Somerville, quoted in Nicole Rogers, 1998, pp175–76.
16. Author interviews with Andrew Kilvert, quoted in Nicole Rogers, 1998, pp176–77.
17. *Forestry Commission New South Wales v Aimann & ors* (unrep SC NSW, 18 June 1993).
18. Author interviews with Andrew Kilvert, quoted in Nicole Rogers, 1998, p163.
19. Ian Cohen, 1996, p183.
20. See <http://www.nefa.org.au/>.
21. Tripods are three poles tied together in a pyramid structure and placed over a road to prevent vehicle access, with a 'sitter' or 'bunny' situated in the apex, who would be injured if the tripod was breached; a tripod-bipod is a variation on this theme. A monopole is a tall single pole held by guy-ropes or wires, with a crows nest at the top with a 'sitter' inside. Dragons are steel pipes concreted under the ground, which a protester locks an arm into, and a sleeping dragon is such a device concealed for future use. Vertical pipes were used in Chaelundi – 8-foot long road drainage pipes inserted vertically into the road and inhabited by a protester to form human and concrete bollards. Lock-ons consist of equipment – such as bike locks or steel pipes (similar to dragons) that lock both arms around a vehicle part – that is used to lock parts of the body to heavy equipment. 'Scrubbing' and 'black wallaby' are techniques rather than devices: scrubbing is quite simply the scattering of heavy obstacles (logs and stones) on forest roads to impede vehicle movements, usually to buy time for an installation further along the road; black wallaby refers to the technique of protesters appearing and disappearing in active felling operations in an attempt to disrupt operations.
22. FPA media release, 8 July 1991, referred to in Nicole Rogers, 1998, pp152–53.
23. Ditto.
24. Andrew Parkes, 2000, p12.
25. Nicole Rogers, 1994, p22.
26. Andrew Parkes, 2000, p12.
27. These productions include Michael Murray's *Going Tribal*; the Steve Happ documentaries of 1992 and 1993; and a *60 Minutes* segment on 'Ferals', produced by Julian Cress in 1995 (on file at the Lismore Regional Art Gallery).
28. Andrew Parkes, 2000, p12.
29. Compilation albums by various artists: *Lock On: Songs to Save Australia's Forests*, 1999, and *MO*, 1997.
30. Author interviews with Samantha Wilcox, Information Officer for the Big Scrub Environment Centre, Lismore (1991–1993), 1995.

31. Author interviews with Luke Bennet, Liberation Café Collective, NEFA, quoted in Nicole Rogers, 1998, pp171–72.

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