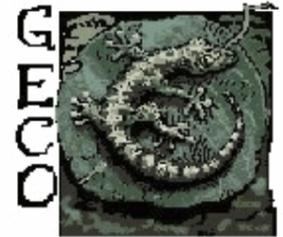




Habitat Restoration Fund Biodiversity Award

FINALIST

Goongerah Environmental Centre, GECO- Citizen Science Program (VIC)



Goongerah Environment Centre (GECO) has been campaigning for the protection of East Gippsland's forests since 1993. GECO has been instrumental in helping secure large areas of new forest reserves that contain a variety of threatened species and forest ecosystems.

GECO employs a range of strategies and tactics to both raise awareness in the community of the threats to forests of the South East Bioregion.

Whilst GECO is well known for direct action through forest blockading, GECO has also found great success employing a number of other techniques to assist in conservation efforts. These include organising educational camps, collaboration with other environment groups and traditional owners, political lobbying and public education.

Rapid decline in the diversity of species in East Gippsland in the last 40 years has been driven by the industrial scale of logging for export woodchips and an inappropriate forest management strategy. Threats to the forest remain current and there is an urgency to protect the islands of biodiversity that remain in a fragmented landscape.

For the last six years GECO has developed an innovative Citizen Science program to document biodiversity values threatened by logging. It provides this

information to the Victorian government to ensure that logging operations comply with laws that protect flora and fauna.

GECO's Citizen Science program has produced a number of positive conservation outcomes and directly reduced negative impacts on biodiversity. Its work has resulted in the creation of hundreds of hectares of protected areas for threatened species that have been detected through the program and the cessation of logging operations that were in breach of the law. Promotion and use of innovative scientific surveys, reports, and assessment, has become GECO's greatest tool, and in this way GECO has become an unofficial regulator of the forestry in East Gippsland.

