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## REBUTTAL

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MR. MACFARLANE and Mr. Loyn have failed to recognize the main thrust of the recent article comparing the development of management strategies for the conservation of the Northern Spotted Owl in the Pacific Northwest of the USA and Leadbeater's Possum in Central Victoria (Lindenmayer and Norton 1993). The key issue was **not** to compare the biology of the respective taxa; that would be nonsensical. Rather, it was to highlight that, unlike the management of Leadbeater's Possum (Macfarlane and Seebeck 1991), conservation strategies for the Northern Spotted Owl have now been developed that are ecologically defensible and scientifically valid (Murphy and Noon 1992).

The acceptance of the management strategies for Leadbeater's Possum by the Timber Industry does not mean that they are ecologically sound. Indeed, the scientifically-based criticisms elucidated by Lindenmayer and Norton (1993) are valid and they underpin concerns expressed by Smith and Lindenmayer (1992) that Leadbeater's Possum could be totally eliminated from timber production forests. Montane ash forests where Leadbeater's Possum occurs, or has the potential to occur, continue to be logged using the clearfelling technique — a practice that has **not** changed with the implementation of the management strategies. The short rotation time and the amount of forest that is logged make clearfelling a major threatening process which is incompatible with the conservation of the

species. Furthermore, there is no evidence to show that present prescriptions will mitigate the impacts of logging on Leadbeater's Possum, particularly as the existing management zones create only deferred timber harvesting areas (see Lindenmayer and Norton 1993). Finally, there is no indication that the Government of Victoria is willing to either: (1) continue to appropriately fund studies of alternative logging practices under the Silvicultural Systems Project (Wilson 1991; Barnett 1993), and/or (2) implement key findings from such studies and employ modified timber harvesting techniques; probably as a result of a legislated over-commitment to produce timber and pulpwood (Barnett 1993).

Clearly the attempts to conserve Leadbeater's Possum are hampered by the speed of landscape modification and habitat destruction that far outstrips the pace of bureaucratic change. I hope that in the near future these difficulties will be remedied and the management strategies for the conservation of the species will evolve to a more advanced level, as has occurred in the case of the Northern Spotted Owl.

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*Continued from page 82.*

animal kingdom is just as potent for selecting what survives.

In 1995, we will have another chance to see how the conservation of invertebrates is progressing. Another conference on the theme will be held in Melbourne. For registration of interest contact: Dr Alan Yen, Invertebrate Survey Department, Museum of Victoria, 71 Victoria Crescent, Abbotsford, Victoria 3067, Australia. The book of the 1993 conference papers will be available in early 1994. If you interested in purchasing a copy, do not hesitate to contact me.