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## "Land Improvement or Institutionalised Destruction? The Ringbarking Controversy, 1879–1884, and the Emergence of a Conservation Ethic in New South Wales"

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Stubbs, Brett J. "Land Improvement or Institutionalised Destruction? The Ringbarking Controversy, 1879–1884, and the Emergence of a Conservation Ethic in New South Wales." *Environment and History* 4, no. 2, Australia special issue (June, 1998): 145–165. doi:10.3197/096734098779555628. Ringbarking, as a means of destroying trees, was known and practised from the earliest years of British settlement in New South Wales. The practice became controversial as it accelerated across the pastoral lands of the colony from the 1870s. This controversy was mainly the result of fears that ringbarking, carried out speculatively by pastoral lessees, might defeat the object of the land settlement policy of the colony. Parliament responded by enacting legislation to regulate the ringbarking of trees on Crown lands, and in so doing provided a forum for the expression of a wide range of contemporary attitudes towards deforestation. These ranged from the mundane questions of pasture improvement and timber destruction, to the loftier issue of climate deterioration. Examination of these attitudes, as expressed principally in the parliamentary debates in connection with the Ringbarking on Crown Lands Regulation Act 1881, reveals the emergence in late-nineteenth century New South Wales of a vibrant conservation ethic. This opposed, albeit unequally, the environmental exploitation or 'development' ethic which continued for many decades thereafter to dominate the relationship between nature and human culture in the colony. All rights reserved. © 1998 The White Horse Press

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