

Goldspink, Billie-Jo (from The Forester Sept 2007)

I guess you could say I was destined to be a forester. Growing up in the small timber town of Tumbarumba in southern NSW, I was always out and about on some sort of adventure in the forest with my father from a very early age. Both of my grandfathers were involved in the local timber industry, one working as a forestry machine operator and the other as a foreman for the then Forestry Commission of NSW. My father's love for the bush was instilled in me during our many family camp outs when we would go hunting, fishing and exploring through the beautiful Alpine Ash forests close to home.

The local high school also included forestry and the timber industry in its agriculture and geography syllabus as the school had its own pine plantation and school farm. My own work experience within the field of forestry started during the normal NSW Year 10 work experience program in 1998. I was interested in working with native animals and plants so my father suggested that I 'check out the Forestry' - so began my career!

After enjoying the first initial week, I decided that Forestry was a definite possible career choice so during my HSC years of 11 and 12, I decided to pursue a newly formed subject called Work Studies. At the time, Work Studies was only seen as a subject for the not-so-academic students to help them find employment on completion of school studies. However, luckily for me, my school Careers Advisor at the time thought that this was the perfect opportunity to start networking and to really discover what forestry was about beyond the initial week that I had already been involved with. Over the two years of Work Studies I 'worked' with the then State Forests of NSW Tumbarumba and Tumut offices and gained wonderful insight into both native and plantation forest management. During school holiday breaks in 1999, I was given my first paid job with State Forests in Tumbarumba, Riverina Region at the age of 16!

After completing Year 12, I took a year off to work and enjoy life away from the books. During some of this time I was employed at the Hyne Softwood Mill in Tumbarumba where I gained some valuable knowledge and experience of the timber processing industry.

In 2002 I then set off to Canberra to Study the Bachelor of Science (Forestry) at the Australian National University. The next four years were filled with fantastic memories of field trips, bar crawls, social events and the forming of a life long pact between three forestry chicks - the 3 musketeers! From the outset in first year until the final exam in fourth year, guys in the class outnumbered the girls. But as the male numbers dropped over the years, female numbers stayed constant - 3! Hence we were always together and so we were aptly named the 3 musketeers. Even when we jointly won the ANU Forestry School Douglas Brodie Memorial award, the plaque was inscribed '3 Musketeers!! Emily May and Melinda Mylek, both foresters & members of the IFA, and myself still stay in very close contact even though we are now 'separated'!!!

During uni breaks I was employed with State Forest of NSW Hume Region over a number of summers as well as becoming involved in work experience at Bathurst and Oberon (Macquarie Region of Forests NSW) and ACT Forests in Canberra.

Upon graduation in 2005, I was successful in obtaining a Grade One Forester position with Forest NSW in the much sought after location of Batemans Bay, on the NSW south coast, as the Harvest Planning Forester. My job involves using GIS (aaaaarrghhh!!) on an almost daily basis as well as liaising with a number of different stakeholder groups including local councils, neighbours, Local Aboriginal Land Councils, apiarists and graziers. Luckily I'm also based in a position that is not office bound so I'm often in the field - the best part of the job!! I've also been fortunate enough to be involved with Aboriginal Cultural Heritage surveys as well as ecology surveys. Fire fighting has also played a major role in my job here at Batemans Bay with me spending a very lonely Christmas Dinner 2006 in the office eating Spaghetti from the can whilst being the Forester-on-duty!! I also had the wonderful opportunity to help out in the 2006 Billo Fire that threatened the Tumut plantations. Being located in Batemans Bay, I've had the great fortune of being involved with forest issues from Nowra in the north to Eden in the south and (believe it or not) Tumbarumba in the west! Batemans Bay is the 'central' location of the Southern Region of Forests NSW which is managed by the very knowledgeable Ian Barnes, past president of the IFA!! So us foresters here in Southern Region are also in the know when it comes to interesting heritage places throughout our forests, especially tramways!! My father, Mark Goldspink, is also part of Southern Region based in Tumbarumba as the Feral Pest Officer so visits back home make for interesting conversations over the dinner table!!

My main interest (or perhaps a concern) for the forestry profession is, like many others, the apparent lack of enrolling students. I would love to go back to my old high school and stand up in front of all those other kids and let them know how exciting, challenging and fulfilling a career in forestry can be. I'm sure that the majority of students at the school don't even realise that there are professional degrees and careers in the field of Forestry as every time I go back 'home' *without fail* someone will ask what it was that I went off to uni to study or what do I do??!! It is so frustrating.

I guess by harassing my younger brother, who is currently preparing for his Year 12 final exams, I may be able to recruit 1 new forester for the future! Fingers crossed! (And look out Peter Kanowski if I'm successful!)

Billie-Jo Goldspink



