

## The Loss of a Lookout

by Leigh Murray

In our early days at Tuross Head, I planted a lovely little group of three gorgeous *Eucalyptus caesia* amongst the boulders near our north east boundary. They grew well as spindly plants for several years, and produced some stunningly beautiful flowers. But Tuross, we learnt, is subject to 150mm downpours, and despite excellent drainage down the slope, this leads to root rot. We lose a plant or two after virtually every such major rain event, in different areas of the garden each time. I never know where I'll find a surprising, sudden death.

Eventually, all three *Eucalyptus caesia* were clobbered. One outlasted the other two, but in the end it died too. But its main trunk stayed upright. For years. And this spindly dead 'spike' was the number one lookout for birds in the area. Just about any bird flying from south to north on the eastern side of our block would pause there to case the joint. A neighbouring Norfolk Island Pine, and tall, bushy *Banksia integrifolia*, were ignored. It was the *E. caesia*, alive or dead, that was perfect.

It was so popular that I left it there. It looked a bit daggy, but with a beautiful bird atop it, it looked pretty good.

It amazed us that such a spindly dead tree could stay upright for so many years, in gales, with only very slight bracing from a *Kennedia rubicunda* that popped up near its base, and wound around its lower section. A few weeks ago, I set up a small stepladder beside it to prune the top of a *Banksia integrifolia*. And something happened. Perhaps I unknowingly brushed slightly against the dead spike, or perhaps I breathed heavily on it. Whatever, I found it fallen over the next day.

So, no more lookout.

I've got a replacement, a more *Phytophthora*-tolerant *E. leucoxylon* 'Euky Dwarf', growing slowly beside that spot, but I doubt that this tree can ever take over the same function as that wonderful tall slender lookout. The birds miss it.

