

Birdwatching weekend

Leard Forest, NSW

Saturday 22 – Sunday 23
November 2014



Barking Owl Photo: Michael Dahlem

Critically Endangered Ecological Community at Leard Forest

Leard Forest, NSW is an endangered ecosystem comprised of the Leard State Forest (under the management of Forestry Corporation of NSW) and the Leard State Conservation Area (under the management of the National Parks and Wildlife Service of NSW).

Leard's community of White box, Yellow box, Blakely's Red gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland is listed as a Critically Endangered Ecological Community and home to 30 significant listed species, including vulnerable fauna species and plants and some migratory birds.

The reason they are listed is that they are at risk of extinction unless they are protected.

Despite this, the Leard is under continual, and possibly terminal encroachment by the Leard mines precinct which currently includes Whitehaven's Tarawonga coal mine, Idemitsu mine Boggabri Coal and the under construction Whitehaven Maules Creek coal mine.

In the face of multiple looming species extinctions taking place in the Leard, in May 2014 The Wilderness Society together with Sustainable Living Armidale and regional birding groups conducted a bird survey in conjunction with Birdlife Australia Birds of Significance Australia-wide survey.

A further community led bird survey is now planned for the weekend of 22-23 November.

In May, the birders identified 82 species of birds within the SCA alone, including 5 listed as "vulnerable" under the Threatened Species Act NSW.

We excitedly look forward to spring birdwatching at the Leard, when the mating and nesting is underway and migratory species may be present.

What makes this event so important

It is a painful prospect, yet it is very clear that under a business-as-usual scenario the Leard and its life forms are doomed by the onslaught of coal mining.

Already, the Boggabri coal mine owned by Japanese industrial giant Idemitsu has devastated large portions of the eastern and southern part of the Leard. Now, the Maules Creek mine is in its preparatory stages, ready to start blasting and excavating the forest to create a black hole so large that the resulting carbon emissions will equal those of the entire country of New Zealand.

According to Mick Roderick, Woodland Birds Project Officer of Birdlife Australia:

"We just can't afford to lose large remnants like Leard. They are sinks for the wildlife that's left. ...To my mind Leard is one of the most important remnants for Threatened Woodland Birds"

Programme

SESSION 1

Saturday 22 November 2014 at 3.00pm-10.00pm
Sunset and early evening birding, including picnic dinner

SESSION 2

Sunday 23 November 2014 at 6.00am-10.00am
Morning birdwatching

*Note these session times may be subject to change. If you register, we will let you know about any changes

Who should attend

Whatever your level of experience, you are welcome, from very experienced to beginners.

We are grateful for the presence of some highly experienced and knowledgeable bird experts who have provided not only their technical advice but also shared their tips about identification through visual and auditory means.

Participants will be allocated to groups led by highly experienced individuals.

Resources

To best prepare for the event, we recommend that you refer to the following resources. These are online databases compiled by a respected local naturalist, Michael Dahlem.

www.mdahlem.net/birds

If you wish to specifically look at Maules Creek birds, go to www.mdahlem.net/birds/lrdbirds.php

If you would like to read the report of the May 2014 birdwatching weekend, email Anna Christie as below.

Location

The location will be the Leard State Conservation Area, Maules Creek, *with the possibility that we will be permitted to access larger stands of trees within the non-mine areas of Leard State Forest*. The organisers have yet to secure permission from NSW Forestry Corporation as to the latter.

The Leard State Conservation Area may be accessed via Leard Forest Rd or Maules Creek Rd, Boggabri and is approximately equidistant from Narrabri and Boggabri. A map will be provided.

Expressing your interest to attend

Contact: Anna Christie, The Wilderness Society
M: 0425 322 186 E: christieanna@me.com
to advise your interest and find out more details.

No illegal activities

This is an opportunity for nature lovers in the NSW community to observe, record, and inform their networks about what is going on at Leard Forest.

If you see this as an opportunity to protest or commit any illegal act, this is not the event for you.

Guidelines for participants

Please refer to the Narrabri Bushwalkers website www.narraribushwalkers.org.au for the comprehensive bushwalkers checklist and Code of Ethics. This includes what to bring. If you have a GPS, please bring it.

Materials available prior to event

A Dropbox will be set up to include survey forms, and other documents. If you do not have a printer or access to internet don't worry we will print some off. Just let us know.

Inclement weather arrangements

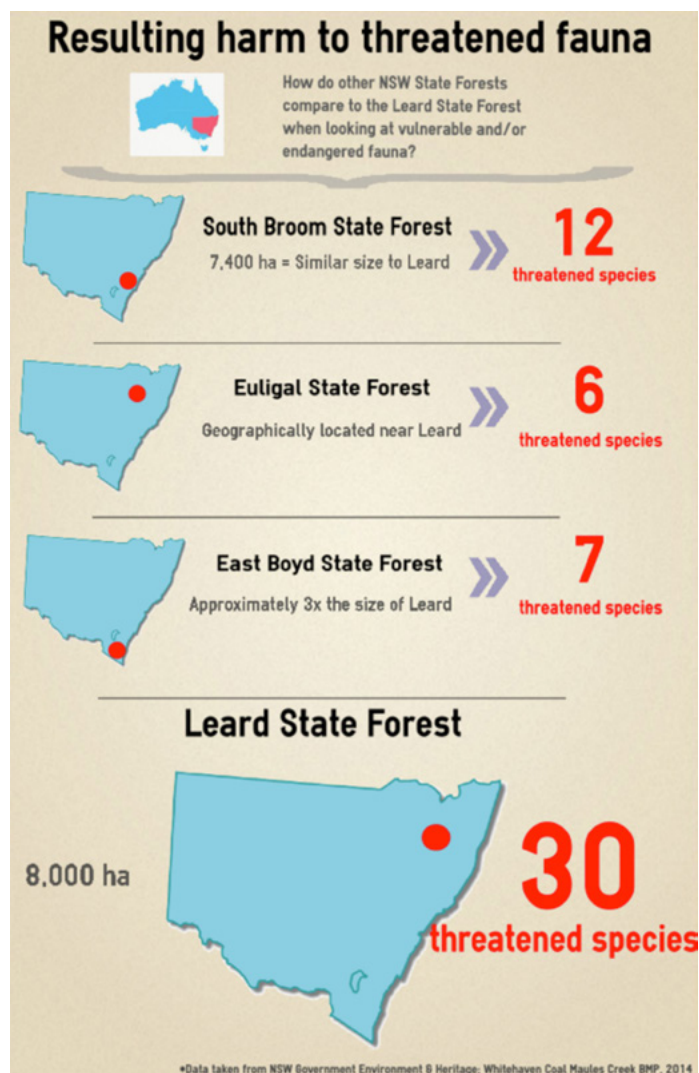
The event will go ahead rain or shine – unless conditions become dangerous due to bad roads or flooding. Details TBA.

Camping available

Fully equipped camping facilities are available at Maules Creek farm "Wando", for a charge of \$10 per night which includes campfire dinner/breakfast. Details are available on request.

The importance of the Leard

In terms of biodiversity, the Leard is immensely valuable. It is listed as critically endangered, and the following infographic has some surprising comparisons.



Infographic: Katie Rorison