



Our mission is to help conserve the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains and to increase awareness of the natural environment in general.

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## BIG PROJECT WITH A HUGE IMPACT

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[Convenor of Blue Mountains Conservation Society No Badgerys Creek Airport Subcommittee]  
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One of our members prepared a very useful document for us about the species impact of the proposed Western Sydney Airport. This article shamelessly steals parts of this document.

The proposed Western Sydney Airport will have serious and irreversible impacts on some of the nation's most endangered species, both on the airport site and within the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

The proposal will directly remove over 300 hectares of Cumberland Plain Woodland, a critically endangered ecological community. The airport proposal singlehandedly constitutes a significant reduction in the viability of this ecosystem.

The airport will have considerable regional-scale noise impacts on wildlife and especially on threatened bird species. The majority of the Cumberland Plain landscape will be subject to noise levels above the known upper tolerance of bird communities. Scientific research shows that areas subjected to over 50 dB typically result in declines of 10 to 25% total bird abundance, with many sensitive species 'disappearing' entirely.

The impact of noise and direct strike on the critically endangered Swift Parrot and Regent Honeyeater are particularly concerning. Both species are in steep decline due to habitat loss and predation with fewer than 2000 wild birds remaining. The airport not only removes hundreds of hectares of Swift Parrot feeding habitat, but also straddles its key migration route. No studies have been undertaken of either critically endangered species' response to aircraft noise and strike mortality.

Airport operations are also likely to impact sections of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. Similarly there has been little to no research or assessment on the potentially severe impacts of the proposed airport on the biodiversity of this region.

The Scarlet Robin is a well-known species of the Cumberland Plain Woodlands, and these birds migrate between the Blue Mountains forests during summer and the Cumberland Plain's open woodlands to feed in winter. The noise from an operating airport will cover both summer and winter habitat for this species and will cut off its annual east-west migration to the eastern Cumberland Plain. If the airport is built there is sound basis for concern that this species' song could be lost forever from Western Sydney.

The Little Eagle is another characteristic woodland species not found in Sydney's sandstone habitats and is in national decline and protected as Vulnerable to Extinction in NSW. Local birders report that Badgerys Creek is one of the best and last remaining 'hotspots' for this species in the region. This species does not tolerate disturbance. Combining the massive on-site impact and heavy noise disturbance extending to the majority of the Cumberland Plain landscape this species may well similarly disappear from the Cumberland Plain's woodlands forever.

Every species responds in its own way to noise, making local knowledge critical. There are however some impacts which are common to noise responses globally:

- A substantial decline in wildlife abundance occurs with regular noise over 55 dB
- Species respond differently. Some species are not impacted at all; others are entirely excluded by even low levels of noise
- Some species acclimatise to noise over time and others are immediately and permanently excluded by noise
- Some species survive noise (with reduced abundance) through adaptation; e.g. birds increasing the pitch or timing of calls to overcome noise pollution.
- To date, acclimatisation has been observed only in common urban species. Rare & endangered wildlife do not generally adapt to noise pollution

The EIS process has completely failed to address impacts of noise on wildlife of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. There is very little background noise in almost all of the World Heritage Area, which is habitat to a wide range of sensitive wildlife species.

The Burragarang Valley region contains a considerable suite of rare and endangered grassy woodland fauna, most of which are not present elsewhere in the WHA or the region. The Burragarang is coincidentally the region likely to receive the greatest noise impacts from the proposed airport. These serious impacts need serious assessment; however at present the details of such impacts remain unknown.

We call on Environment Minister Josh Frydenberg to tell us that these devastating impacts on wildlife have been considered during the approval process.

