

To:
Clr Kaye Gartner

from:
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https://shoalhaven.infocouncil.biz/Open/2018/12/SA_20181211_AGN_12916_AT_WEB.htm

Something which might be quite useful to your advocacy for the Tree Canopy proposal in Council tomorrow relates to those birdlife matters that our local group are involved with on a regular basis.

BirdLife Australia [BLA], of which we are a local branch as BirdLife Shoalhaven [BLS], has as a major element of its operation, a "Birds In Backyards" (BIBY) program. This is one of the most popular activities of BLA and BLS. Substantially, it relates to residential areas - urban zones as habitats for birds and the pleasure and enjoyment that is derived from this. Trees are of course a vital part of this in what they contribute, especially where the habitat has been damaged by tree removal. In a scenario where bird numbers are shown to be declining, the urban culprit of tree clearing and removal for urban growth and developments needs to be addressed.

BLS actually has a specific committee member with responsibility for the BIBY program, which has mainly involved talks and presentations to local Shoalhaven community groups of all ilk and persuasion. To this point it has been extremely successful and popular. The preservation or replacement of trees and their habitat value is of course, something that arises in these talks. BLS has also co-operated with council Tourism branch in producing a Bird Walks brochure for the Shoalhaven, which suggest the value of birds and their habitat as trees has an importance in the visitor perspective. That is something that BLS can support from its dealings with enquiries from visitors to the Shoalhaven.

I would add that our BLS conservation perspective necessarily involves recognition of the value of urban trees and the necessity to preserve remaining native trees and remediate any removal in urban areas. The habitat corridor that can be provided by preserving trees thus linking bushland areas in and on the perimeter of our urban areas is critical to bird health and survival. It can be taken as a given that so many people as Shoalhaven residents and visitors take enormous pleasure from the presence of birds in urban areas, contributing significantly to the value and amenity of where people live. The development of the council Growth Management Strategy at this time is also of interest, especially as it currently tends to define natural environment too narrowly, not recognizing biodiversity values such as birdlife and not yet provide a satisfactory definition of "sustainability", both concepts entirely relevant to the issues of Tree canopy and birdlife. It is a glib but true saying that suggests "No trees no birds". Our BLS perspective also recognizes the varying context in both the residential and community areas within urban areas.

In recent years it has become far too easy to remove trees, especially native species from the urban landscape thus involving then loss of many decades and, in some cases, hundreds of years of growth. The value of trees for nesting by a large range of birds is widely recognized and this is a delight for residents, children and visitors. Urban areas are also a great refuge in hot and dry conditions as birds are attracted to tree shelter and water.

A continuing loss of trees has joined the list of threats posed to our arboreal asset and the associated wildlife and biodiversity.

I would point out by way of an exemplar, that a critically endangered species, the Regent Honeyeater, threatened with highest risk extinction in the immediate future, was recently seen and photographed in trees adjacent to council's own buildings and later at the Wollongong Botanic Gardens.

yours
Chris Grounds