

Some wild life

Description

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An engagement with *nature* enhances peopleâ??s emotional attachment to places according to a recent article by researchers into sustainable cities, Timothy Beatley and Peter Newman.



They maintain that â??Urban environments that are greener, more nature-full, will attract greater interest by residents and help to strengthen emotional bonds to place and community, in turn increasing urban resilienceâ?• (3335).

They refer to the health benefits of natural environments within or close to cities. People will get out more, walk further and are healthier. They cite evidence that stress and fatigue are reduced, and thereâ??s a positive effect on **mood**. After walking in natural environments, â??participants showed

marked decreases in depression, anger, tension, confusion and fatigue and increases in vigorâ?• (3337).

The effect also applies to environments in which animal life is present. â??Viewing birds (and listening to their calls) and watching other wildlife, at once provides mental and emotional connections, stress reduction and other biophysical benefits.â?•

Fauna, particularly bird life, â??re-enchant,â?• contribute to a â??distinctive sense of place,â?• and reduce stress (3338). Such connections with nature arouse curiosity and a sense of wonder (3340).

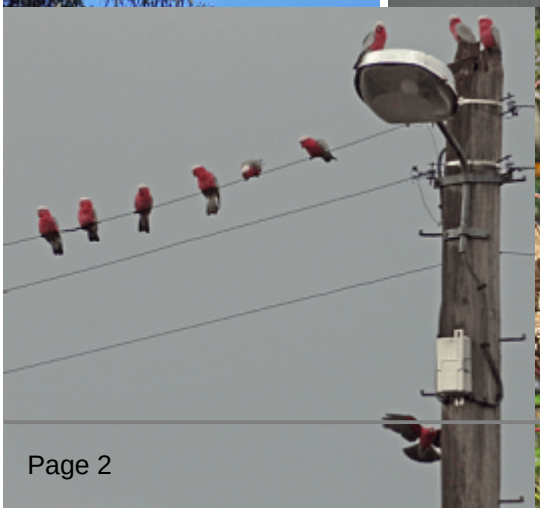
Here are some photographs taken in Australia to illustrate the richness and variety of the urban and peri urban wildlife in one country at least.



























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Obstacles

The authors assert that there are of course obstacles to this communion with nature, such as busy schedules, overwork, competition from indoor activities and car dependency (3342).



Computers come in for a bit of a bashing: â??The time spent by children on electronic media has actually increased in recent years, boding ill for the kinds of contact with the natural world that will foster a lifelong love of and comfort and wonder provided by nature, as well as the physical exercise and activity that outside play generatesâ?• (3337).

Itâ??s easy to think that, but I donâ??t know how supported it is by evidence. In any case, these photographs of wildlife were taken by a digital camera and a smartphone, and processed, stored and distributed with the aid of digital media. I also identified the animals by drawing on my own knowledge, much gained from watching numerous nature programmes on television, but also looking up images and descriptions on a web search engine. I supplemented my knowledge with smartphone web searches while moving about. Thereâ??s an argument to be made that our love of animals is already heavily mediated by digital technologies.



Notes

- Also see Why cartoons have animals, Soft fascination.
- The animals in the photographs above are identified via rollover captions. These may not be visible on tablet computers: Probably White-faced Heron, Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park, near Sydney; Masked Lapwing, Mossman, Sydney; Sulphur crested cockatoo at South Head, Sydney Harbour; Cockatoos, Montsalvat, near Melbourne; Probably a Grey Teal duck, Ruffey Lake Park, Templestow, Melbourne; Galahs, Cootamundra, NSW; Koala, Taronga Zoo, Sydney; Kookaburras, Montsalvat, near Melbourne; Rainbow Lorikeet, Mossman, Sydney; Lyrebird, Blue Mountains, NSW; Magpie, Mossman, Sydney; Probably a Bushtail Possum, Canberra; Kangaroo, somewhere in NSW; Kangaroos in campsite, somewhere in NSW; Juvenile Eurasian Coots, Ruffey Lake Park, Templestow, near Melbourne; Eurasian Coot, Ruffey Lake Park, Templestow, near Melbourne; Road sign, Jervis Bay, NSW; Seagulls and man on phone, Sydney; Parrot, Taronga Zoo, Sydney.
- Note that the cited article does not mention animals for food, hunting sports, riding, contest, or animals as pets, pests, nuisance, or vermin, or the predatory nature of animals. People can also be frightened and disturbed by animals. Not all animals are admired. Are fauna only to be encouraged and admired if they support human health and welfare?
- In an interesting article about the history of tourism in the Blue Mountains, Nicole Porter and Catherin Bull state: â??park narratives find their expression across many representational media from amateur photography to commercial film and online advertising, and as technologies evolve so too can the message and meanings they transmit. Historically, a diverse range of meanings have been associated with nature, a diversity matched by the numerous media that have been used to give expression to them. Park managers can actively utilize a wide range of technologies to engage with the wider public. Just as technologies, such as GPS, have allowed diverse and complex physical resources to be managed differently, so too should current and future

technologies such as the Internet be used to manage and facilitate a diversity of park narrativesâ? • (p.181). [Note added 20 June 2014]
- Flocks of lorikeets in the trees at dusk, Victoria Avenue, Chatswood, Sydney, 25 July, 2013.
- Listen to the sound of bellbirds (against other chirping) in the Blue Mountains, NSW, recorded on 13 July 2013 in the valley beneath the Three Sisters.

Reference

- Beatley, Timothy, and Peter Newman. 2013. Biophilic cities are sustainable, resilient cities. *Sustainability*, (5)3328-3345.
- Porter, Nicole, and Catherin Bull. 2013. Conceptualizing, representing, and designing nature: Cultural constructions of the Blue Mountains, Australia. In E. Carr, S. Eyring, and R. Guy Wilson (eds.), *Public Nature: Scenery, History, and Park Design*: 170-182. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press.

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2. Australia
3. mood
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