

Title Independent conservation organisation Forest & Bird (BirdLife Partner in New Zealand) today lodged an appeal against a 140-hectare open-cast coal mine on Denniston Plateau conservation land. 'An open-cast coal mine will wipe out the ecology of the Denniston Plateau,' Forest & Bird President Andrew Cutler said. 'This one of a kind environment is home to some extraordinary plants and animals, and is already conservation land. We will vigorously argue that it should remain protected.' Mr Cutler said the plateau should be protected for all New Zealanders to experience and enjoy. 'If the open-cast mine goes ahead, all New Zealanders will lose access to a beautiful and historic area, and its outstanding natural values will be obliterated.' Forest & Bird is appealing against the resource consent granted on 26 August to Australian mining company Bathurst Resources. Forest & Bird wants to protect the plateau's rare landscape and nationally endangered animals, such as the great spotted kiwi, the fernbird and the carnivorous giant land snail, *Powelliphanta patrickensis*. 'This is an incredibly diverse natural plateau with bonsai gardens of rātā amid expansive sandstone pavements and wetlands. Pygmy pine forests dominate in moss-covered gorges, and rare tussocklands stretch across this mountain moonscape,' Forest & Bird Top of the South Field Officer Debs Martin said. 'The commissioners said they granted the consent with 'considerable reservations and anguish'. They agreed the plateau and its inhabitants were 'remarkable', and the mine and processing plant would destroy 200 hectares 'yet they believed the economic benefits outweighed this destruction. With such undisputed importance, we believe the commissioners erred in their final weighting,' Debs Martin said. Forest & Bird has proposed a new 5900-hectare reserve on the Denniston and Stockton plateaux to protect the last remaining habitat of several endangered species. The reserve would be included in Schedule 4 of the Crown Minerals Act to stop it being mined in the future. It would cover publicly owned land on the Denniston Plateau, the upper Waimangaroa Gorge, the southern Stockton Plateau, and the Mt William Range. 'Open-cast mines on the nearby Stockton Plateau have already wiped out rare ecosystems, and we want to protect what's left on the Denniston Plateau,' Debs Martin said. [Click here to subscribe to The BirdLife Pacific Quarterly E-Newsletter.](#)