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MEDIA RELEASE: For immediate release

The Hon. Catherine Cusack launches book about Gardens of Stone

The Hon. Catherine Cusack will launch the book "*A threatened wonderland - the Gardens of Stone*" at NSW Parliament House this Wednesday, 15th August 2012.

In the book, photographer Ian Brown presents a collection of stunning images by amateur and professional photographers that showcase the natural values of the Ben Bullen State Forest, the lynchpin to the 40,000 hectare *Gardens of Stone Stage 2* reserve proposal. This forest is currently under threat from open-cut coal mining proposals.

"The alternative to mining is a magnificent conservation reserve that would provide sustainable and valuable benefits to public recreation and the local economy for centuries. The reserve would be an investment in the future of New South Wales," says Justin McKee, Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

"The photos in this book show off how stunning this area is and consequently, what a tragedy it would be for mining operators to rip it up and shred it.

"People could enjoy the superb forest and woodlands and masses of internationally significant and scenic pagodas for eternity if our reserve proposal got the go ahead."

The area proposed for conservation has been of much political interest over the years with inspections from politicians such as the Hon. Catherine Cusack, Paul Toole Member for Bathurst and the Hon. Robyn Parker Minister for Environment.

"If the Coalpac Consolidation Project and the Pinedale Stage 2 Extension Project proposals are approved by government, it would demolish the habitat for 135 species of vertebrate wildlife, more than 20 threatened species, over 500 native plants and three Endangered Ecological Communities alone," comments Chris Jonkers, Lithgow Environment Group.

Politicians from the NSW Liberal, Labor, National and Green party have been invited to attend the launch to be held 6:30pm, 15th August 2012 in the Theatre, NSW Parliament House, Macquarie Street, Sydney.

"This book reveals the richness and beauty of the forested, pagoda landscape in Ben Bullen State Forest that is threatened by open cut-coal mining. A campaign to protect this same area has been ongoing for more than 25 years," says Keith Muir, Colong Foundation for Wilderness.

The Gardens of Stone, North-western Blue Mountains, gets its name because of its picturesque rock formations known as 'pagodas' and the hundreds of native plants and animals that live there; some of which are threatened to extinction.

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Event Information: www.colongwilderness.org.au/news/2012/gardens-stone---threatened-wonderland

Link to images: www.bluemountains.org.au/gc-media-images.shtml

