



## Threatened Species Strategy Action Plan 2015-16

### 20 birds by 2020

The Threatened Species Strategy Action Plan 2015/16 identifies twelve threatened birds for action. They were identified by the Office of the Threatened Species Commissioner in response to expert input and consultation with the scientific community, and through consideration against the principles for prioritisation in the Threatened Species Strategy.

The remaining eight birds will be identified within one year through appropriate consultation.

### Norfolk Island green parrot

**Status:** Endangered

The Norfolk Island green parrot is unique to the island and important to the local community there – Norfolk Islanders love their green parrot.

Recovery of the Norfolk Island green parrot is achievable; actions to protect breeding sites have proven successful in the past and will aid its recovery. Zoos Victoria is actively involved in the recovery of the parrot, as are the Norfolk Island National Park staff and the community. Expertise is in place and the Australian Government and others have committed financial support. Management of feral predators like feral cats and rats will not only help the green parrot, but all of the native animals on the island. Reducing the impact of feral cats is a key area of focus in the Action Plan, as well as creating safe havens for threatened species.



Partnerships are established, costs are relatively low and chance of success high. By committing to this species, driving continued partnership and supporting the Norfolk Island community, recovery of the Norfolk Island Green parrot is possible.

# Plains wanderer

Status: Critically Endangered

Plains wanderers are highly unique, ground-dwelling birds that live in the grasslands of Queensland, NSW, Victoria and South Australia. The plains wanderer has experienced significant recent declines and is in clear need of assistance to avoid extinction. Managing grasslands for plains wanderers also benefits lizards, insects and other threatened species that use the same habitat.



Captive breeding and habitat manipulation are proven means of improving this bird's trajectory. Plains wanderers inhabit sparse native grasslands and are often absent from areas where grass becomes too dense or too sparse. The species responds positively to strategic grazing, which provides an opportunity to partner with farmers and private landholders. By working with farmers to graze grassland strategically, and developing a captive insurance population, the chance of success is high. Partnership with state governments, non-government organisations and bird experts has already begun and can be strengthened. These actions align with the National Landcare programme's focus on helping farmers manage their land, priorities of the Green Army and the Threatened Species Strategy's focus on feral cats and habitat improvement.

# Mallee emu-wren

Status: Endangered

The mallee emu-wren is found in the mallee country on the South Australian and Victorian border. Recent wildfires in South Australia seem to have almost wiped out the South Australian populations. The bird appears now only to be surviving in small pockets in Victoria. Protecting the mallee emu-wren, and the mallee habitat it uses, will also help many other threatened mallee birds like the black-eared miner, western whipbird (eastern) and malleefowl.



Partnership between state governments, the Australian Government and Birdlife Australia are already underway. Co-investments from partners have been made, though further investment is needed, and the Australian Government National Landcare Programme and Green Army initiative may be able to assist. Opportunity also exists for business to support this recovery programme.

## Night parrot

Status: Endangered

The night parrot is a highly elusive nocturnal ground dwelling parrot found in the arid and semi-arid zones of Australia; it is one of only three ground-dwelling parrots in Australia.

Thought to be extinct but recently found again in Queensland, the key conservation aim in the *Action Plan for Australian Birds* of “night parrot discovered and stable at more greater than one location” is realistic.

Improving knowledge of the bird means active management can be implemented where necessary. The rediscovered night parrot is particularly important to Australia’s bird watching community and over time, protection of its habitat will help to protect other threatened species sharing it.

Partnerships between the Australian Government, state governments and non-government organisations will allow for coordinated and focused action to protect the parrot.



## Yellow chat (Alligator Rivers)

Status: Endangered

This particular subspecies of yellow chat is under pressure from habitat degradation. Feral pigs are altering the landscape and reducing suitable areas for foraging; by reducing this threat, the yellow chat will be able to recover. Yellow chats are important to the Indigenous peoples of Kakadu. Acting to protect the yellow chat is relatively low cost, will support other threatened species affected by feral pigs in the area and help protect the natural features of Kakadu National Park, one of Australia’s most famous natural heritage icons.



By ridding the floodplains of prickly mimosa, para grass and other aggressive weeds, and keeping feral buffalo, cattle and pig numbers under control, recovery of this yellow chat can be supported. Actions to reduce the number of feral cats in Kakadu are also likely to benefit the subspecies.

As the range for the yellow chat (Alligator Rivers) is within a Commonwealth National Park, we have a particular responsibility to act and lead by example in protecting it. Partnering with Parks Australia and local Indigenous communities, we will be able to create a safe environment for the Alligator Rivers yellow chat.

# Helmeted honeyeater

Status: Critically Endangered

The helmeted honeyeater is the bird emblem of Victoria. Its wild population is small and isolated as a result of fragmented habitat, increasing the risk of extinction from threats such as drought, wildfire and disease. Other threats include habitat degradation, competition from other birds and predation.

Through the efforts of the existing recovery team, the Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater and Zoos Victoria, we know that habitat improvement, captive breeding for release, and supplementary feeding can boost the population of helmeted honeyeaters at relatively low cost.



There is strong community and state government involvement and existing links with the Australian Government's 20 Million Trees Programme, which is expanding the suitable habitat at Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve in Victoria. There is further potential for Green Army teams to support further habitat improvement and assist with the monitoring and care of wild birds. The helmeted honeyeater's habitat also traditionally overlaps habitat of the lowland population of the Leadbeater's possum. Over time, plantings for the honeyeater may also assist the possum.

# Norfolk Island boobook owl

Status: Endangered

The Norfolk Island boobook owl nearly became extinct. Without captive breeding intervention the Norfolk Island boobook owl would be lost already. While genetic uniqueness was compromised, the role of the Norfolk Island boobook owl in the environment remains important as it is one of the only apex predators on the Island.



The costs for recovering the Norfolk Island boobook owl are low; by guaranteeing safe nesting sites free from predation, the trajectory of the owl should improve. Action on this bird will also demonstrate the success of species protection on Norfolk Island and help to generate increased engagement and involvement in the community. Parks Australia are a key partner in recovering this species, as is the community of Norfolk Island; continuing these partnerships will ensure the security of the species into the future.

## Hooded plover (eastern)

**Status:** Vulnerable

The hooded plover is a small Australian beach nesting bird. Similar to many other beach nesting birds, hooded plovers are a flagship species to a section of the community that highly values iconic beach nesting birds.



Action on this species is focused on education and reducing human-induced pressures on nesting sites. Actions are also umbrella in nature, supporting other beach nesting birds and animals that utilise the same habitat.

There is strong alignment to the National Landcare Programme and the Green Army, which could undertake works that protect nesting habitat. Community involvement and state government partnerships are high, with regular monitoring undertaken in NSW, and active community groups already running education campaigns.

In Victoria, nests protected with fencing and signs were six times more likely to fledge young. Through continued community engagement and state partnerships, as well as drawing more actively on Australian Government programmes like the Green Army, these numbers can be reproduced and species recovered.

## Eastern bristlebird

**Status:** Endangered

Eastern bristlebirds occur along the east coast of Australia in distinct populations, with a stronghold located around Jervis Bay. These birds are part of threatened species recovery at Booderee National Park, undertaken in partnership with traditional owners.



Management actions to protect the eastern bristlebird (mosaic burning, weed reduction and feral predator management) have proven effective and also support other threatened species that share its habitat.

As a threatened species on Commonwealth land, we have an additional responsibility to protect the eastern bristlebird. Partnerships through Parks Australia, local Indigenous people and the Australian National University are established and an improved trajectory is achievable.

## Regent honeyeater

**Status: Critically Endangered**

Regent honeyeaters are striking, colourful birds that traditionally inhabited woodlands of Eastern Australia. Success in recovery of the regent honeyeater will rely on improved quality and quantity of woodland habitat, as well as reducing the threats of noisy miners.



There is strong engagement and community participation in regent honeyeater conservation; Taronga and Melbourne Zoo both participate in captive breeding and release programmes and regent honeyeaters are listed in Queensland's and New South Wales' conservation prioritisation programmes. Birdlife Australia also has an active involvement and is delivering an Australian Government funded initiative in Capertee Valley. Working in partnership with these organisations and the community through the National Landcare Programme and Green Army can deliver good value-for-money outcomes for this species.

Efforts to conserve the regent honeyeater will also benefit the brush-tailed phascogale, squirrel glider, bush stone-curlew, swift parrot and painted honeyeater which use the same woodland habitats.

## Orange-bellied parrot – emergency intervention

**Status: Critically Endangered**

The orange-bellied parrot is endemic to south-eastern Australia, but fewer than an estimated 50 birds remain in the wild. The orange-bellied parrot is iconic, seen as a flagship species in the fight against extinction and is particularly valued by community groups. Its identity also has created a unique eco-tourism industry with hundreds of tourists visiting known breeding locations every year.



The current distribution of the orange-bellied parrot during its breeding season is a coastal strip of south-western Tasmania. It also has populations in captivity as a safeguard against extinction.

Partnership between governments, community groups, zoos and the recovery team will be key to the survival of this species.

# Western ground parrot – emergency intervention



**Status: Critically Endangered**

The western ground parrot is one of only three ground nesting parrots in Australia. Once present across south-west Western Australia, recent surveys have not found western ground parrots at traditional locations and the bird appears now be restricted to Cape Arid National Park. A single uncontrolled bushfire, disease event or predator invasion could result in the extinction of unique Australian bird.

The western ground parrot has a strong and growing supporter base in the local community. A partnership between South Coast NRM, the Friends of the Western Ground Parrot, the Department of Parks and Wildlife and Perth Zoo is working to prevent extinction. Success of the newly established captive breeding population will be key to the security of the species, and management of feral cats and fire at Cape Arid National Park will be essential for local recovery. With a population estimate of less than 150 individuals, and a captive population of less than ten, we need to act.

Emergency actions include protecting the wild population and creating a captive insurance population. Opportunities for further support through the National Landcare Programme, the local Natural Resource Management group and existing partnerships with the Western Australian Government and Perth Zoo have potential to aid recovery.

## Photo Credits

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