



MEDIA RELEASE

The Hon Peter Garrett MP

Minister for Environment Protection, Heritage and the Arts

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URGENT ACTION ON ORANGE-BELLIED PARROT

Environment Protection Minister Peter Garrett has announced urgent action is being taken to save the orange-bellied parrot from extinction with the latest data showing the wild population could become extinct within three to five years.

Mr Garrett said the parrot recovery team had moved quickly to prepare an 18-month action plan to improve the species' chances of survival.

"The Australian Government has committed \$260,000 to fund critical activities identified in the action plan to help save this species, while the relevant state governments will commit valuable resources to support these recovery activities in their states," Mr Garrett said

"The latest data are extremely disappointing given the considerable effort that's been made to recover this species, however the parrot recovery team's work has us very well placed to respond.

"The fact that the species has remained in the wild to date is largely due to the significant work over the years by the recovery team, along with the Australian, Tasmanian, South Australian and Victorian governments, Birds Australia and many dedicated groups and volunteers.

"As a result of this work, we have available critical monitoring and research data which signalled that it's time to reprioritise our activities for this species.

"We also have a captive breeding program in place which, given the serious threat to the wild population, is now even more critical to the parrot's survival," Mr Garrett said.

Recovery team chair and ecologist, Peter Menkhorst, said the team was already responding to the monitoring data.

"The data shows us that the wild population is in decline because the proportion of females breeding in the wild is very low," Mr Menkhorst said.

"Our main priority right now is to boost the genetic diversity of our captive population.

"To do this, we are bringing in more birds from the wild to add to our captive breeding stock where, in contrast to the wild situation, almost all females attempt to breed each year.

"This will do two things—it will maintain a safe insurance population by ensuring we have as much genetic variation in our captive population as possible. It will also set us up for the longer term so that, in the unfortunate event the wild population continues to decline, we will be in a better position to re-introduce captive-bred birds to the wild.

"We are far from giving up on the wild population. We will soon be undertaking a number of actions aimed at increasing breeding in the wild. This will include trials to provide supplementary food, and ensuring plenty of nest boxes are available at the breeding sites."

The recovery team consists of ecologists and wildlife managers representing the Commonwealth, Tasmanian, Victorian and South Australian governments, Zoos Victoria, Birds Australia and other conservation and community groups. Hundreds of volunteers work on recovery activities each year.

The orange-bellied parrot was listed as *critically endangered* in 2006.