

# ACTION PLAN No. 17

In accordance with section 21 of the *Nature Conservation Act 1980*, the **Superb Parrot (*Polytelis swainsonii*)** was declared a vulnerable species on 19 May 1997 (formerly Instrument No. 89 of 1997 and currently Instrument No. 192 of 1998). Section 23 of the Act requires the Conservator of Flora and Fauna to prepare an Action Plan in response to each declaration. This is the Action Plan for the:

## Superb Parrot *Polytelis swainsonii*

### Preamble

The *Nature Conservation Act 1980* establishes the ACT Flora and Fauna Committee with responsibilities for assessing the conservation status of the ACT's flora and fauna and the ecological significance of potentially threatening processes. Where the Committee believes that a species or ecological community is threatened with extinction or a process is an ecological threat, it is required to advise the responsible Minister and recommend that a declaration be made accordingly.

Flora and Fauna Committee assessments are made on nature conservation grounds only and are guided by specified criteria as set out in its publication "*Threatened Species and Communities in the ACT* July 1995".

In making its assessment of the Superb Parrot, the Committee concluded that it satisfied the criteria indicated in the adjacent table.

An Action Plan is required in response to each declaration. It must include proposals for the identification, protection and survival of a threatened species or ecological community, or, in the case of a threatening process, proposals to minimise its effect.

This Action Plan was prepared by the Conservator of Flora and Fauna in accordance with the requirements of the *Nature Conservation Act*, in consultation with the Flora and Fauna Committee and after the statutory period for public comment.

While the legal authority of this Action Plan is confined to the Australian Capital Territory, management considerations are addressed in a regional context.

### Criteria Satisfied

- 2.1 The species is known to occur in the ACT region and is already recognised as vulnerable in an authoritative international or national listing.
- 2.2 The species is observed, estimated, inferred or suspected to be at risk of premature extinction in the ACT region in the medium-term future, as demonstrated by:
  - 2.2.1 Current serious decline in population or distribution from evidence based on:
    - 2.2.1.1 Direct observation, including comparison of historical and current records;
    - 2.2.1.3 Serious decline in quality or quantity of habitat; and
    - 2.2.1.5 Serious threats from herbivores, predators, parasites, pathogens or competitors.
  - 2.2.4 Seriously fragmented distribution for a species currently occurring over a moderately small range or having a moderately small area of occupancy within its range.
  - 2.2.6 Small population.

### Links with Other Action Plans

Measures proposed in this Action Plan complement those proposed in the Action Plan for Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland (Action Plan No. 10) and in the Action Plans for other threatened birds in the ACT (Action Plan Nos. 15, 16, 18, 19, and 20). Action Plans are listed at the end of this document.

## Species Description and Ecology

### DESCRIPTION

The Superb Parrot *Polytelis swainsonii* is a slender grass-green parrot, about 400 mm in length, with a distinctively long tail (Figure 1). The male's general plumage is brilliant green with yellow-green underparts. The forehead, throat and cheeks are yellow and there is a scarlet band across the foreneck. The female is green, with a dull bluish-green face. Both sexes have a yellow iris and a coral red bill. Immature birds resemble the adult female, except that the iris is pale brown and young males are slightly brighter green (Forshaw and Cooper 1981). It is extremely difficult to distinguish immatures from females in the field.

### DISTRIBUTION

*P. swainsonii* occurs in central and eastern inland NSW, parts of northern ACT (Figure 2) and northern central Victoria. Formerly, it occurred in southern Victoria (Higgins 1998).

In Victoria, the species is found in the upper Murray Valley, mainly in the riverine forests and woodlands of Barmah Forest (Emison *et al.* 1987) and further west along a narrow corridor between Echuca and Yarrawonga. It has also been recorded within 10 km of the Murray, Ovens and Goulburn rivers. *P. swainsonii* is absent from Victoria during the winter months (Webster and Ahern 1992).

In NSW, there are two main centres of breeding distribution, once thought to be distinct, but now known to be one population (Higgins 1998). One concentration occurs in the Riverina district including Griffith, Wagga Wagga and Deniliquin, where birds may be present all year round. This area adjoins the species' Victorian range. The second breeding population occupies the south-west slopes region in an area approximately bounded by Cowra, Rye Park and Yass in the east (including parts of the Yarrowlumla Shire and the ACT near Hall), and Grenfell, Young, Cootamundra and Coolac in the west (Webster and Ahern 1992). *P. swainsonii* is absent from the ACT region in the winter months (Davey 1997).

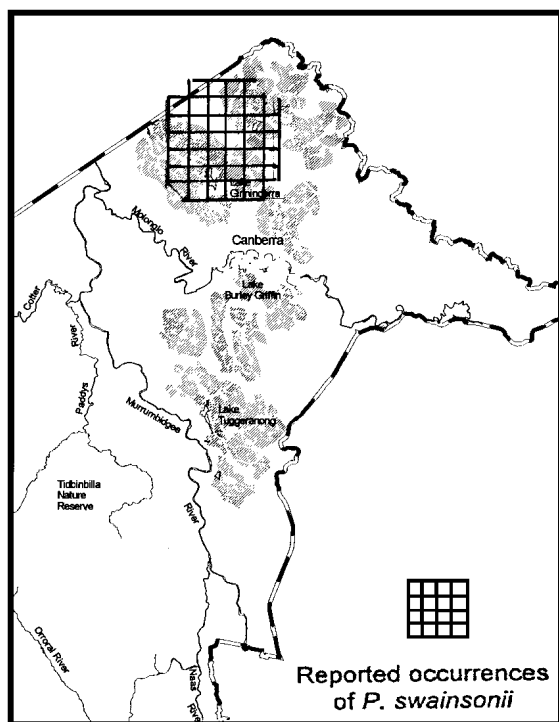
To the north and adjoining the two NSW breeding regions, *P. swainsonii* is found predominantly during the winter months. This wintering area includes the Namoi River between Narrabri and Gunnedah, the Castlereagh River between Coonamble and Gilgandra, and the districts around Hermidale, Tottenham, Warren and Parkes. Breeding has not been confirmed in this area (Webster and Ahern 1992).



**Figure 1:** Male Superb Parrot (*Polytelis swainsonii*).

Scale: Approximately three-eighths actual size.

In the ACT region, *P. swainsonii* is present during the breeding season (spring-summer) and is sparsely distributed in the area between Canberra, Yass, Sutton and Gundaroo (Davey 1997), which coincides with the distribution of Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodlands. During the spring and early summer of 1998, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NSW NPWS) recorded the species a number of times in the area between Boorowa, Yass, Murrumbateman and Gundaroo. Records of flocks of between 20 and 50 birds were made only three times during this period - at Gundaroo, Murrumbateman and a site north of Yass. Records of single birds or pairs were made throughout the region. Most ACT records are from the Hall area, although there were sightings of a pair and one female at Mulligans Flat Reserve in late 1996 (COG 1998). Local historical records and results of recent surveys for *P. swainsonii* are summarised in Davey (1997) and show a decline from former numbers. The total breeding population is estimated as less than 5,000 pairs (Higgins 1998).



**Figure 2:** Locations of occurrences of *P. swainsonii* in the ACT, redrawn from Taylor & COG (1992).

### HABITAT

*P. swainsonii* is a highly mobile species which undertakes distinct movements between breeding and non-breeding parts of its range each year, although birds in parts of the NSW Murray-Riverina area may be present all year round (Webster and Ahern 1992).

In the NSW south-west slopes breeding region, including the Yarrowlumla Shire to the north of the ACT border, *P. swainsonii* nests in eucalypt woodlands, both riverine (including River Red Gum *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*), and the Box/Gum woodlands (Yellow Box *E. melliodora*, Blakely's Red Gum *E. blakelyi*, Apple Box *E. bridgesiana*, Grey Box *E. microcarpa*, White Box *E. albens* and Red Box *E. polyanthemos*) away from the watercourses (Webster and Ahern 1992). Birds here may travel up to 10 km from nests to foraging areas (Webster 1988; Garnett 1992a) although at some sites, including those north of Canberra, the nesting and foraging areas coincide and the birds move very little distance at all during breeding (Webster and Ahern 1992; Martin 1996; Davey 1997). In the ACT region, the Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodlands form the major habitat of the species, with *E. blakelyi* being the main source of nesting hollows, and the woodland understorey being the main feeding habitat (Davey 1997).

Many of the sites where *P. swainsonii* was recorded in the 1998 NSW NPWS survey are travelling stock reserves or other crown reserves with high quality remnants of Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland. In most cases, the sites are surrounded by highly modified country.

### BEHAVIOUR AND BIOLOGY

Movements are poorly known. Although there is a northward shift in the population, some birds remain in the breeding areas (Higgins 1998). *P. swainsonii* arrives in the ACT region during August to breed, before departing the following January.

In the non-breeding season, groups may consist of pairs, or flocks of up to 30 birds, usually with equal proportions of males and females. Nesting begins by September and continues through to November. Loose nesting colonies are often found, and form around clusters of nest trees. Four to six eggs are laid and incubated for about 20 days. Chicks fledge at about five weeks. The female remains at the nest throughout incubation and until the chicks are well developed, while the male collects food and brings it to her and her chicks (Webster 1988).

*P. swainsonii* is active mostly in the early morning and late afternoon when it feeds on the ground (on grass seeds), shrubs, understorey or in trees (Higgins 1998). Davey (1997) stated that in the ACT region, *P. swainsonii* rarely feeds in trees, preferring to feed on the ground, particularly favouring grasses and other plants associated with Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland. The species also eats fruits, berries, nectar flowers, and occasionally insects (Higgins 1998).

### Conservation Status

*P. swainsonii* is recognised as a threatened species in the following sources:

#### International

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES), Appendix 2 (species which might become endangered if trade in them is not controlled and monitored in order to avoid utilisation incompatible with their survival).

Vulnerable. - Collar *et al.* 1994.

#### National

Vulnerable. - Threatened and Extinct Birds of Australia (Garnett 1992a); the Action Plan for Australian Birds (Garnett 1992b).

## Australian Capital Territory

Vulnerable. - Section 21 of the *Nature Conservation Act 1980*, Instrument No. 192 of 1998 (formerly Instrument No. 89 of 1997).

## New South Wales

Vulnerable. - *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*, Schedule 2.

## Victoria

Vulnerable. - *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*, Schedule 2.

The species is also the subject of Action Statement No. 33, prepared by the Victorian Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DNRE).

## Threats

*P. swainsonii* has been seriously disadvantaged by extensive clearing and disturbance of its prime habitat, the box woodlands in the ACT, NSW and Victoria.

Since European settlement in the ACT region several major environmental changes have occurred that are likely to have seriously disadvantaged *P. swainsonii*. These are:

- **clearing of once widespread native open forest and woodland**, particularly box woodlands; and
- **urban development** - rapid spread of urban areas puts increasing pressure on remnant woodland patches; leading to:
- **fragmentation, separation and degradation** of remaining viable habitat areas.

In the ACT, it is possible that only as little as 3-4% of the original extent of the Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodlands remains in something like its natural state (J. Landsberg pers. comm.). The current intact area of the adjoining White Box woodlands in NSW is considered to be less than 0.01% of its original extent (Prober and Thiele 1995).

Continuing threats to the species' woodland habitat include:

- **clearing of both living and dead trees** (for agricultural expansion, urban development and firewood collection);
- **grazing by livestock**;
- **use of chemicals** such as fertilisers and pesticides;
- **inappropriate fire regimes**;
- **other causes of rural tree dieback** (see Action Plan No 10 for discussion);

- **degradation of habitat** through inappropriate fire regimes; and
- **competition for tree hollows** for nesting sites (may also be a threat to breeding success).

In the past, activities associated with illegal trade in wildlife, such as poaching and trapping, are likely to have contributed to the decline of *P. swainsonii* in the ACT region but the species is now abundant in captivity. Road kills of birds feeding on spilt grain remain a problem. However, the overall effects on the species are insignificant in comparison with habitat loss and its consequential effects.

## Major Conservation Objectives

The main objective of this Action Plan is to support national and regional efforts to maintain in the long term, viable, wild populations of *P. swainsonii* as components of the indigenous biological resources of Australia.

Implementation of conservation actions outlined in the Action Plan for Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland (Action Plan No. 10) will be fundamental to making progress towards achievement of this objective. Other actions which will assist are:

- encouraging, and where possible participating in research, monitoring and experimental management programs aimed at identifying and managing the causes of population decline;
- negotiating with rural lessees for cooperative management arrangements since the habitat of the species within the ACT region is found predominantly on private land (Davey 1997);
- cooperating with surrounding shires in NSW for conservation of road reserves and travelling stock routes, as they contain a large number of suitable trees for the species and when not grazed, provide a food source (Martin 1996; C. Davey pers. comm.);
- increasing community awareness of the need to protect the species and its habitat.

## Conservation Issues and Intended Management Actions

### OVERVIEW

The key to conservation of this species in the ACT region lies with the conservation of its principal habitat, the Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodlands (an endangered ecological community). *P. swainsonii* is one of five bird species which are listed as threatened in the ACT region which inhabit these woodlands. Any management prescriptions aimed at enhancing the conservation status of these woodlands will be beneficial to its associated fauna species.

Critical habitat features required by *P. swainsonii* include:

- Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland; and
- clusters of large living and dead trees for nesting sites.

Also important to conservation of this species is co-operation with regional and national recovery efforts.

### SURVEYS

Identification and mapping of known and potential *P. swainsonii* habitat in the ACT region is an essential first step to addressing the local decline of the species. The area between Canberra and Murrumbateman should be the focus of this mapping. Martin (1996) and Davey (1997) identified a number of areas to the north west of Canberra that are potentially important breeding habitat areas for *P. swainsonii*. Intensive surveys of the area between Canberra, Murrumbateman, Gundaroo and Sutton are required to establish more precisely the status, distribution and habitat use of the species in the local region.

- ⇒ Environment ACT will cooperate with the Shires of Yarrowlunla and Yass, and the NSW NPWS in any program to identify and map nesting and feeding habitat areas in the local region. This will aid the identification of high priority areas for conservation of the species.
- ⇒ Environment ACT will pay particular attention to patches of Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland near Hall, and patches of other Yellow Box woodland in the north of the ACT, near the suburbs of Dunlop and Fraser.

### MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Protection of woodland areas that are known to provide nesting or feeding habitat for the species is essential and will be achieved through the following management strategies:

- **Maintaining the integrity of nest colonies (clusters of nest trees).** Conservation management needs to focus on known nest colonies as the units of management so as to maximise habitat security and social cohesion within the colony (DCNR 1992). Thus clusters of nest trees and even individual trees should be managed for population recovery (Webster 1988; Webster and Ahern 1992).
- **Regenerating nest trees.** Regeneration can be enhanced through careful management of grazing pressures. The removal of stock grazing close to known *P. swainsonii* nesting colonies in box woodland should be encouraged. Areas of high priority for such management may be delineated as further research on habitat use, particularly foraging areas, becomes available.
- **Controlling removal of live and dead timber.** Measures should be taken to ensure the protection of standing living and dead timber, particularly those stands found on freehold land (NSW), leasehold land (ACT), and public lands such as reserves and travelling stock routes. Webster and Ahern (1992) recommended establishing a 100 m buffer around each known nest tree to exclude logging and silviculture all year round. Davey (1997) suggested that this buffer be greater in the Canberra region due to the fact that the species nests and feeds in the same area. Pressure from firewood collecting needs to be reduced. Known and assessed potential *P. swainsonii* nest trees should be permanently exempt from firewood harvesting.
- **Planting of trees with potential to develop nest hollows.** Planting efforts by landholders and conservation groups should be encouraged. These efforts are likely to be most effective in known nesting areas because the species is faithful to its nesting sites and returns year after year.
- **Minimising adverse effects of fire on nesting trees and foraging habitats.** Webster and Ahern (1992) stated that known *P. swainsonii* habitats should be given the same protective measures against unplanned fire as are given to other identified areas of faunal significance. Planned burning should not proceed within 100 m of any known nest tree, except after consultation with the appropriate conservation authority. Planned burns during the breeding season in the vicinity of known foraging sites should be carefully managed, especially where these sites are close to known nest sites. Due to the absence of the species in this region during winter, burning is best timed to be conducted

in the months of May, June and July, although timing should also take into account other grassland habitat effects.

- **Discouraging use of nesting sites by introduced species.** Where known nest sites are being used by introduced species, including the European Honey Bee *Apis mellifera* and the Indian Myna *Acridotheres tristis*, pest control techniques should be used in order to maximise the number of suitable nest hollows available to *P. swainsonii*. The scope for placement of nest boxes should be evaluated.

⇒ Environment ACT will seek to implement these conservation management strategies where it has the responsibility to do so. It will also encourage other agencies, individuals and community groups to do likewise.

## REGIONAL COOPERATION

The regular breeding of the species in the Yass/Murrumbateman region adjacent to the ACT highlights the importance of a regional approach to conservation management. Liaison with other authorities involved in the conservation of *P. swainsonii* will be an essential part of regional conservation effort. NSW NPWS and the Victorian DNRE are also involved in the conservation of *P. swainsonii*. The development of a research and monitoring program for the local region in conjunction with the NSW NPWS is appropriate.

The Shire of Yarrowlunla has extended its Tree Preservation Order to include standing dead timber as potential nesting sites for *P. swainsonii* in the Wallaroo Rd area, on the north-western border of the ACT. The Yarrowlunla/Queanbeyan Bushfire Management Committee is responsible for fuel management strategies that include the native grassland occurring on public lands in the same region. These local initiatives could be built upon in the ACT.

⇒ Environment ACT will initiate discussion with the Shires of Yass and Yarrowlunla, and the NSW NPWS concerning a regional approach to the conservation of *P. swainsonii*. Joint conservation management initiatives and coordinated action will be investigated.

## MONITORING

Monitoring is essential to determine the long-term status of *P. swainsonii* in the ACT and region, and the success of any conservation measures taken.

Surveys of *P. swainsonii* need to be conducted to monitor population size and utilisation of habitat. Ideally, three surveys should be conducted each breeding season, the first in late August to early

September, as birds arrive back from wintering areas, and before nesting occurs. A second survey should occur during the nesting period, while breeding females are in nest hollows. The third survey should be conducted on completion of nesting when most or all young have fledged, but not yet departed for wintering areas.

It may be possible to involve volunteers in this type of survey. Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG) volunteers already carry out surveys for the species on two weekends each year as part of the national recovery effort.

⇒ Environment ACT will liaise with COG to investigate ways in which a standardised monitoring program involving volunteers may be established.

## RESEARCH

There are several avenues of research which could assist in providing information vital to the long term conservation of *P. swainsonii*. It is not the role of the ACT Government to undertake this research itself, although it may assist and/or facilitate research where resources can be made available and where the application of research results to conservation of the species is a high priority. Some key areas of research are:

**Habitat utilisation.** The feasibility of a radio tracking study of *P. swainsonii* north-west of Canberra needs to be examined. Routes and habitat types used by the parrots could be mapped, allowing identification of crucial habitats and foraging routes.

**Threatening processes** such as competition from other hole-nesting species need to be examined. Common Starlings and Common Mynas are both aggressive hole nesters and may compete with *P. swainsonii* for nesting resources. The introduced European Honey Bee *Apis mellifera* has been found to occupy nesting hollows in eucalypt woodland (Paton 1996), and apparently caused the abandonment of at least one traditional nest in the ACT region (P. Olsen pers. comm.).

**Post breeding dispersal** should be examined. Investigation of local movements and dispersal should be encouraged through a mark-recapture study, jointly conducted by relevant state agencies involved in *P. swainsonii* conservation. Although a colour banding study of the species may be virtually impossible, and the capture and recapture of birds being an expensive exercise, there may be an opportunity to use other marking techniques. Data on the relative contribution of the local breeding area to the overall population may be obtained through a study on the breeding population in this region.

**Birds at individual nests and colonies** should be studied during the breeding season in order to gather data on nest sites, including the level and pattern of use of nest trees from year to year and the extent of nest site fidelity.

**A study of migration of *P. swainsonii*** should be encouraged, particularly in relation to habitats and food sources. Colour banding of individuals according to breeding area and subsequent monitoring of suspected wintering areas may be a feasible approach.

**The potential for supplementary local populations of *P. swainsonii*** through reintroductions could be assessed for new sites where nesting sites are available. This could accelerate the extension of the species' range and increase the probability of long-term viability of local populations.

⇒ Environment ACT will encourage and, where feasible, support research into the ecology and conservation of *P. swainsonii* in the ACT region. Results of this research will be applied as appropriate.

## Protection

This Action Plan, in conjunction with the Action Plan for Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland (Action Plan No. 10), is the main instrument by which continued survival of *P. swainsonii* and its grassy woodland habitat can be ensured.

The Action Plan for Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland outlines conservation measures for the protection of this endangered community in the ACT. It is anticipated that these conservation measures will contribute to the conservation of *P. swainsonii*, as its habitat is largely within this ecological community.

### MEASURES FOR PROTECTION

There are four principal measures for protecting the habitat of *P. swainsonii* in the ACT:

1. **Reservation.** Recognised as providing the primary mechanism for ensuring sites of high conservation value are not converted to a land use incompatible with their natural values.

2. **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).** Memoranda of Understanding between the ACT Government and landholders, particularly the Commonwealth Government, provide another means by which woodland with high conservation value can be managed so as to maintain their conservation value in perpetuity while enabling other compatible land uses, as identified in each MOU, to occur.

3. **Property Management Agreement (PMA) for leased rural land.** PMAs are being progressively introduced as rural leases are renewed. They establish an agreed framework for sustainable management of the land. Management standards may be agreed in recognition of particular conservation issues. The PMA process is currently under review to improve flexibility and accountability so that advances in knowledge and changes in management requirements can be more satisfactorily accommodated.

Rural land in the ACT may contain areas of remnant woodland habitat that is used by *P. swainsonii*. Conservation management of *P. swainsonii* habitat, predominantly Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland, on rural leases, will be promoted to rural lessees in terms of the requirements of the *Nature Conservation Act 1980*, the draft Action Plan for Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland and this Action Plan. PMAs are the most suitable mechanism for addressing the conservation requirements of threatened species whose habitat occurs in leased rural land. PMAs for leases which contain woodland identified as habitat for threatened species will be required to provide for its conservation, sustainable management and improvement where appropriate.

4. **Off-reserve conservation on Public Land within the urban fabric.** The PMA process applies only to rural leasehold land. A similar mechanism does not exist for Public Land that is not formally reserved or which is occupied by Government agencies. Where appropriate, the Conservator of Flora and Fauna may give directions under Section 47 of the *Nature Conservation Act 1980* for the protection of flora and timber on the land in question. Wherever feasible, a MOU will be developed with the responsible agency to specify aspects of land management that are beneficial or detrimental to the conservation of *P. swainsonii* habitat on the land, and provide guidelines.

⇒ These protection measures will be applied to areas in the ACT identified as *P. swainsonii* habitat, including additional areas identified from processes recommended in this Action Plan.

As referred to earlier in this Plan, the focus of attention for habitat protection is in the northern part of the ACT near Hall, and at Mulligans Flat. In the Hall area, there are several patches of woodland of varying conservation value. One of these (10 ha) is already protected within the

Dunlop Reserve established in December 1997. Whether this contains habitat used by *P. swainsonii* is not established. Another patch of similar woodland type is located nearby at Mount Rogers. This is managed as Public Land (Urban Open Space).

A third area of potential woodland habitat for *P. swainsonii* is within a rural lease for which a PMA will be required. This area is shown on the Territory Plan as Hills, Ridges and Buffers. Other potential habitat areas are patches of high quality Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland and other woodland types surrounding the Village of Hall. These areas are also covered by the land use policies for Hills, Ridges and Buffers.

⇒ Environment ACT will develop management arrangements with the managers of Public Land (Mulligans Flat Reserve, Dunlop Reserve (Parks and Conservation Service) and Mount Rogers (Canberra Urban Parks)) and private leased land containing known or potential habitat for *P. swainsonii*. These management arrangements will seek to encourage a cooperative regional approach to protection of habitat for the species.

## Socio-economic Issues

The main social benefit of conserving the Superb Parrot, *P. swainsonii* is that it addresses community concerns that further loss or extinction of significant ecological communities, together with their component native species, be prevented.

Bird watching is a major national recreational pursuit. Thus conservation of bird communities enhances the lifestyle of ACT residents and provides eco-tourism opportunities (in keeping with promoting Canberra as the bush capital).

### 1. Future Urban Areas

The areas of potential habitat for *P. swainsonii* in the northern part of the ACT near Hall are shown as Hills, Ridges and Buffers or Urban Open Space on the Territory Plan. These are not under threat from any proposal for urban development

### 2. Rural Leasing Aspects

Some of the woodland areas which are potential habitat for *P. swainsonii* are within rural leases. The Rural Policy Taskforce has recently reviewed all aspects of rural leases including the recommendation of appropriate lease terms. Two recommendations of the Taskforce which have been accepted by the Government and will affect this Action Plan are that:

- the lease term for some parts of the ACT will be to the year 2020 with significant areas of rural land being available for 99 year leases; and
- there be no withdrawal clauses over any part of a rural lease unless it has been clearly defined for an imminent public work, such as a road, stormwater or other infrastructure or where a habitat has been identified as needing special conservation status.

This will mean that the Territory would have to withdraw any area of land having conservation significance at the time of an application for a new lease, or acquire it subsequently under the provisions of the *Land Acquisition Act 1994*.

It is expected that it will be later in 1999 before rural lessees are able to take up a new lease under the proposed new arrangements. In the meantime, Environment ACT will need to identify areas requiring special conservation measures before applications for extended lease terms are received. In the event that large areas of a lease are to be withdrawn for conservation purposes, consideration will be given to the viability of the remainder of the lease.

## Legislative Provisions

The following legislation is relevant to conservation of flora and fauna in the ACT region:

### AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

#### ***Nature Conservation Act 1980***

The Nature Conservation Act provides a mechanism to encourage the protection of native plants and animals (including fish and invertebrates), the identification of threatened species and communities, and management of Public Land reserved for nature conservation purposes. Specified activities are managed via a licensing system.

Native animals and plants may be declared in recognition of a particular conservation concern and increased controls and penalties apply. Species declared as endangered must be declared as having special protection status, the highest level of statutory protection required,

#### Other Relevant Provisions

The Nature Conservation Act provides authority for the Conservator to manage Public Land reserved for conservation of the natural environment. Activities that are inconsistent with management objectives for nature conservation are controlled. Special measures for conservation

of a species or community of concern can be introduced in a reserved area, including restriction of access to important habitat.

Section 47 of the Act allows the Conservator to give the occupier of land directions for protection or conservation of native plants and animals. This provision is relevant to the management of threats to the conservation requirements of a species or community of concern that occurs on leased land.

Part VIA of the Act provides for the Conservator to enter into a Management Agreement with an agency where the agency's activities have potential to conflict with nature conservation objectives. This provision is relevant to management of conservation threats on unleased land.

Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland, which provides habitat for *P. swainsonii*, has been declared as an endangered ecological community (formerly Instrument No. 89 of 1997 and currently Instrument No. 192 of 1998). The Conservator of Flora and Fauna has prepared an Action Plan for its conservation (Action Plan No. 10).

#### **Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991**

The Land (Planning and Environment) Act is the primary authority for land planning and administration. It establishes the Territory Plan, which identifies nature reserves, national parks and wilderness areas within the public land estate.

The Land (Planning and Environment) Act establishes the Heritage Places Register. Places of natural heritage significance are to be identified and conservation requirements specified.

Environmental Assessments and Inquiries may be initiated in relation to land use and development proposals.

#### **NEW SOUTH WALES**

##### **Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995**

The Act came into effect on 1 January 1996 and requires the preparation of recovery plans for endangered species (other than those presumed extinct), endangered populations, endangered ecological communities and vulnerable species. Threat abatement plans are required to manage key threatening processes with a view to their abatement, amelioration or elimination. A Species Impact Statement is required when a development application is made on land which contains areas declared to be critical habitat under Part 3 of the Act or which is likely to significantly effect threatened species, populations or ecological communities or their habitats.

The preparation of a Recovery Plan for *P. swainsonii* is mandatory as the species has been listed as vulnerable.

#### **Consultation and Community Participation**

It is appropriate that the conservation of *P. swainsonii* and its associated grassy woodland habitat is promoted through suitable information signs, community liaison and public education. The objective of this promotion is to foster the protection of the species. This type of program has been very successful in the Shire of Boorowa.

⇒ Environment ACT will actively participate in consultations with ACT lessees and surrounding NSW shires concerning management and use of areas of high conservation value.

#### **Implementation, Evaluation and Review**

##### **RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

Environment ACT (Wildlife Research and Monitoring) will have responsibility for coordinating implementation of this Action Plan subject to government priorities and resources.

The Management Plan for the Conservation of the Superb Parrot in New South Wales and Victoria (Webster and Ahern 1992) will be consulted for longer-term management considerations.

##### **EVALUATION**

The Action Plan will be reviewed after three years. The review will comprise an assessment of progress using the following performance indicators:

- completion of commitments that can reasonably be expected to be finalised within the review timeframe (e.g. introduction of a statutory protection measure for a species, development of a management plan);
- completion of a stage in a process with a time line that exceeds the review period (e.g. design or commencement of a research program);
- commencement of a particular commitment that is of a continuing nature (e.g. design or commencement of a monitoring program for population abundance); and
- expert assessment of achievement of conservation objectives of the Action Plan.

The review will be reported to the ACT Flora and Fauna Committee. This will provide Environment ACT and the Flora and Fauna Committee an opportunity to assess progress, take account of developments in nature conservation knowledge, policy and administration and review directions and priorities for future conservation action.

The following conservation actions will be given priority attention:

- ⇒ implementation of management prescriptions to enhance the conservation status of the Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland;
- ⇒ identification of other woodland areas as potential habitat; and
- ⇒ co-operation with regional and national recovery efforts.

## Acknowledgments

Material for this Action Plan was prepared by Anthony Overs.

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The illustration of the species (Figure 1) was prepared for Environment ACT by Marjorie Crosby-Fairall.

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## List of Action Plans - October 1999

In accordance with Section 23 of the *Nature Conservation Act 1980*, the following Action Plans have been prepared by the Conservator of Flora and Fauna:

- No. 1: Natural Temperate Grassland -  
an endangered ecological community.
- No. 2: Striped Legless Lizard (*Delma impar*)  
- a vulnerable species.
- No. 3: Eastern Lined Earless Dragon  
(*Tympanocryptis lineata pinguicollis*)  
- an endangered species.
- No. 4: A leek orchid (*Prasophyllum petilum*)  
- an endangered species.
- No. 5: A subalpine herb (*Gentiana bauerlenii*) -  
an endangered species.
- No. 6: Northern Corroboree Frog (*Pseudophryne pengilleyi*) - a vulnerable species.
- No. 7: Golden Sun Moth (*Synemon plana*)  
- an endangered species.
- No. 8: Button Wrinklewort (*Rutidosis leptorrhynchoides*)  
- an endangered species.
- No. 9: Small Purple Pea (*Swainsona recta*)  
- an endangered species.
- No. 10: Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland -  
an endangered ecological community.
- No. 11: Two-spined Blackfish (*Gadopsis bispinosus*) - a vulnerable species.
- No. 12: Trout Cod (*Maccullochella macquariensis*)  
- an endangered species.
- No. 13: Macquarie Perch (*Macquaria australasica*)  
- an endangered species.
- No. 14: Murray River Crayfish (*Euastacus armatus*) - a vulnerable species.
- No. 15: Hooded Robin (*Melanodryas cucullata*)  
- a vulnerable species.
- No. 16: Swift Parrot (*Lathamus discolor*)  
- a vulnerable species.
- No. 17: Superb Parrot (*Polytelis swainsonii*)  
- a vulnerable species.
- No. 18: Brown Treecreeper (*Climacteris picumnus*) - a vulnerable species.
- No. 19: Painted Honeyeater (*Grantiella picta*)  
- a vulnerable species.
- No. 20: Regent Honeyeater (*Xanthomyza phrygia*)  
- an endangered species.
- No. 21: Perunga Grasshopper (*Perunga ochracea*) - a vulnerable species.
- No. 22: Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby (*Petrogale penicillata*) - an endangered species.
- No. 23: Smoky Mouse (*Pseudomys fumeus*)  
- an endangered species.
- No. 24: Tuggeranong Lignum (*Muehlenbeckia tuggeranong*) - an endangered species.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information on this Action Plan or other threatened species and ecological communities can be obtained from:

Environment ACT  
(Wildlife Research and Monitoring)  
Phone: (02) 6207 2126  
Fax: (02) 6207 2122  
Environment ACT Homepage:  
<http://www.act.gov.au/environ>

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