



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Inquiry: Inquiry into ecosystem decline in Victoria

Hearing Date: 20 April 2021

Question[s] taken on notice

Directed to: Paul O'Sullivan, Birdlife Australia

1. Ms BATH Page no. 41

Question asked.

USA threatened species Act—and the positive effect that it is having across the USA. Could you list the best three bits of it? This is a very big Act, I am sure; it is a big topic, and we have got limited time. You might like to take it on notice, but what is the USA doing well in that threatened species Act? What can we learn from that? And restoration of it?

Response:

The United States Endangered Species Act of 1972 (ES Act) pioneered the model of recovery planning for threatened species management. Under the ES Act, management of listed species (threatened or endangered) is generally guided by quantitative recovery goals established by federal recovery plans. Indeed, 90% of birds listed in the US have formal recovery plans.

*A 2016 systematic review¹ of bird recovery under the ES Act found that 85% of birds protected under the ES Act either increased or stabilised their population size. **The average population increase was 624%.** In contrast, over the same time period unprotected bird populations on average declined by 24%. The review concluded that this success can be directly contributed to the fact that listed species are individually and intensively managed across the entirety of their ranges guided by quantitative recovery goals established by federal recovery plans and that management decisions are made under a “best available science” standard that limits executive discretion and are subject to public review and enforcement.*

The ESA has three major provisions. Listing, legal protection to reduce the threat of extinction (principally limits to the destruction of a listed species, its habitat-as well as the potential to halt development projects that might increase a listed species' risk of extinction) and finally it requires an approved recovery plan for all listed species. In has been argued that the planning provision is key to the Acts success:

¹ Suckling et al. (2016) *A Wild Success: A Systematic Review of Bird Recovery Under the Endangered Species Act*. Center for Biological Diversity. <https://www.esasuccess.org/pdfs/WildSuccess.pdf>



“Recovery planning is potentially the most important part of the ESA. Unlike the other provisions, it is specifically intended to promote an increase in the populations of listed species, rather than to just limit their further decline”².

The three key elements of the US Endangered Species Act:

- *strong recovery plans based on robust science with quantitative recovery goals and consistent federal funding;*
- *monitoring and evaluation of progress with triggers for public review and action if trajectories fail to improve; and*
- *recovery plans identify areas of critical habitat that must be protected, including potential critical habitat for threatened species as a result of climate shift.*

BirdLife and the Places You Love Alliance is advocating for similar measures to strengthen recovery planning within the EPBC Act.

2. Mrs McARTHUR Page no. 43

Question asked.

...million hectares was burnt in the 2019–20 bushfires. What loss of bird species resulted from those fires? And would you also be able to quantify the loss of bird species caused by predatory introduced species into native forests and parks, like dogs, cats et cetera—foxes, rabbits, anything else that pops up.

Response:

BirdLife Australia mobilised its staff and thousands of volunteers to assess the impact of the bushfires on bird species. The results of those analyses were shared widely with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning ([DELWP](#)), the Australian Government and [WWF](#) to inform conservation actions.

Fire and introduced species are a major threat to birds. Analyses of data submitted to our birddata database estimated around 180 million individual birds were impacted by the fires nationally. While no bird species were “lost” (i.e. became extinct) in Victoria as an immediate result of the 2019/20 bushfires, ten birds have been identified as “fauna species of most concern” (see below):

² Foin, Theodore C.; Riley, Seth P.; Pawley, Anita L.; Ayres, Debra R.; Carlsen, Tina M.; Hodum, Peter J.; and Switzer, Paul V., "Improving recovery planning for threatened and endangered species" (1998). Faculty Research & Creative Activity. 234. http://thekeep.eiu.edu/bio_fac/234



- *Brown Gerygone (Gerygone mouki)*
- *Eastern Bristlebird (Dasyornis brachypterus)*
- *Glossy Black-Cockatoo (Calyptorhynchus lathami)*
- *Ground Parrot (Pezoporus wallicus)*
- *Lewin's Honeyeater (Meliphaga lewinii)*
- *Masked Owl (Tyto novaehollandiae)*
- *Powerful Owl (Ninox strenua)*
- *Red-browed Treecreeper (Climacteris erythroga)*
- *Sooty Owl (Tyto tenebricosa)*
- *Spotted Quail-thrush (Cinlosoma punctatum)*

Regarding the “loss of bird species caused by predatory introduced species”, this is a knowledge gap and further research is needed to confidently quantify those collective impacts.