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*Swifts Across the Strait is the newsletter of the Swift Parrot Recovery Program. The Swift Parrot is an endangered bird species endemic to South-East Australia.*

Swift Parrots migrate the longest distance of any parrot in the world. They leave their breeding grounds in Tasmania during Autumn to winter on mainland Australia, and return to Tasmania in the Spring.

The yearly variation in migratory movements of this parrot is partly due to variation in flowering and means that a large number of people are needed to keep track of its distribution, and to collect information on the bird's habitat requirements.

A National Swift Parrot survey is conducted on the third weekend in May and the first weekend in August each year. Observers from Eastern South Australia through to Southern Queensland look for Swift Parrots in an effort to trace the movements of this rare and elusive species.



Photo by: Debbie Worland

## Swift Parrot Collision - Prevention Project

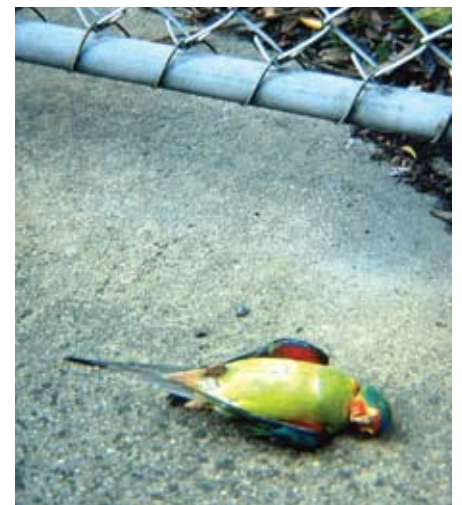
Natalie Holland, Threatened Species Network Coordinator  
WWF-Australia

*It is well recognised that habitat loss is the major threat to swift parrots – both loss of their breeding habitat in Tasmania, and also their over-wintering habitat on the mainland. However, there is another threat that arises as a result of this habitat loss: as human development encroaches into nesting and foraging habitat the birds are being forced into increasing contact with human-made structures – often resulting in collisions.*

The National Recovery Plan for swift parrots identifies adult and juvenile mortality due to collisions with man-made structures as a threat to the species. However, there is little information available on the threat, or the options to minimise it. As a result, the Threatened Species Network, a program of the Australian Government and WWF-Australia, has recently undertaken a project to investigate this issue and potential solutions. The project involved background research on the issue of bird collisions both within Australia and internationally. A workshop was held targeting planners, architects and landscape planners to seek their input into design solutions appropriate for the Australian situation.

### Scale of the problem

Through compiling records on collisions from a range of sources, we have been able to get a clearer picture of the scale of the collision threat, although there



Collision death  
Photo by: C. Tzaros

are still gaps in the information. Since 1987 there have been 173 records of swift parrot collisions, resulting in 145 known deaths. In any given year, the total number of mortalities can be high, such as the 34 collisions and 23 deaths recorded during the 1997 breeding season. The recovery plan notes that on average, 19 adult birds are recovered each year in Tasmania, with just 4 returned to the wild. It is important to note that the actual number of collision related deaths could be much higher than the number of records that are reported. It is possible to estimate that around 1.5%–2% of the entire swift parrot breeding population is killed every year as a result of collisions. It appears that the collision problem is not limited to either adults or juveniles, but that both are similarly vulnerable.

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### Nature of the problem

The collation of collision records indicates two main types of collisions, collisions with windows and with chain-mesh fences. The key to the issue is that swift parrots (as well as birds generally) seem unable to recognise glass or fences as a solid barrier in their flight path. There are two aspects of glass that are particularly problematic; reflective glass and transparent glass. Reflective glass can mirror the sky and surrounding vegetation which birds perceive a continuation of their habitat. Transparent glass that provides an unobstructed view of habitat or sky on the other side of a building is not recognised as a solid barrier by birds. Similarly, wire-mesh fences are impossible to see.

### Solutions for minimising the collision risk

There are steps that can be taken at various stages in the planning and design of new buildings as well as actions to retrofit existing buildings and other structures to minimise the potential risk of swift parrot collisions. The major principle behind minimising the risk of collisions for swift parrots is to minimise glass reflectivity and transparency and create visual noise so that the birds recognise windows and fences as a barrier in their flight-path.

In the planning stage, these potential solutions include consideration of proposed siting of new buildings in the landscape, particularly in relation to potential swift parrot flight paths so as to minimise the proximity of swift parrots to structures that could pose a risk. In the design of the building itself, glazing and other potentially hazardous



What is real, what is reflection?

Photo by: Stephanie Pfennigwerth

structures should be limited in areas that are predictable bird collision areas, or else designed to facilitate their visibility to the parrots. Options to improve visibility include avoiding throughways that give false impression of an unobstructed passageway; angling windows to reduce reflections of adjacent habitat and the sky; creating "visual noise" through differentiations of material, texture, colour, opacity or other features that help fragment window reflections and reduce overall transparency; and muting reflections such as by extended rooflines to close off the angle of reflection of the sky. Many of these options are also relevant to retrofit existing



Swifties feeding on the ground at Castlemaine

Photo by: Debbie Worland

buildings and minimise the risk of swift parrot collisions.

It is hoped that by raising awareness of the threat of collisions and the design solutions available, we will be able to reduce the number of swift parrot deaths due to collisions.

A detailed report on the collision issue is currently being finalised, and will be available shortly.

**For further information, contact Natalie Holland, Threatened Species Network Coordinator for Victoria on Phone: 03 9669 1304 or Email: tsnvic@wwf.org.au.**

## LURG HILLS SURVEYS

Dean Ingwersen, Threatened Bird Network Coordinator, Birds Australia

*The Lurg Hills, near Benalla in north-east Victoria, lie on the southern edge of the box-ironbark country and are overlooked by the spectacular Bogong High Plains to the south.*

A major landscape-scale habitat restoration effort, the Regent Honeyeater Project, has been underway for the past 11 years.

Coordinated by Ray Thomas, this community project has increased the area and improved the quality of habitat for an array of threatened species in the district - to date over 900 hectares of woodland have been re-established or restored. In an attempt to evaluate the response of woodland birds to this revegetation, Birds Australia's Threatened Bird Network (TBN) and its volunteers have conducted bird surveys at 154 sites for the past three years.

In these three years over 120 species have been recorded, with a mix of resident and migratory species present. Some of the birds recorded include Dusky Woodswallow, White-eared Honeyeater, and Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike. A number of threatened Victorian species have also been recorded in the surveys, including the

endangered Grey-crowned Babbler, and the vulnerable Diamond Firetail and Painted Honeyeater.

However some of the most exciting news relates to species recorded breeding in revegetation. White-browed Babbler have been recorded breeding in planted areas, as have Western Gerygone. And in areas adjacent to revegetation Hooded Robins, Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters and Black-chinned Honeyeaters have also been seen nesting in the past few years. This is a great outcome for the project, and a clear indication that plants in the ground in the right mix leads to more birds in the bush. Hopefully some Regent Honeyeaters and Swift Parrots will check the area out soon too!

This important work will continue again this year, with surveys to be conducted on October 4th-5th.

**To register your interest for 2008 please contact Dean Ingwersen, TBN coordinator, on (03) 9347 0757, or via email: d.ingwersen@birdsaustralia.com.au.**

**TBN is funded by the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust.**



Castlemaine golf course replanting

Photo by: Dawn Angliss

## Planting for Swift Parrot Habitat

*The Castlemaine Golf Club have successfully applied for a Threatened Species Network grant through WWF in order to increase swift parrot habitat in their area. The area is already a known site for the birds, as swift parrots have been recorded around Castlemaine regularly over the years.*

The grant is part of a larger project in which volunteers have been conducting bird surveys and began tree planting in 2002. Over the next five years the volunteers involved in this project hope to plant trees indigenous to the region which the swift parrot relies on and to also increase the number of mid and understorey plants. Increasing plant density in these lower layers will make the area less attractive to noisy miners, which prefer open woodland and who have recently overtaken much of the local bushland. While noisy miners are native, they are also aggressive and can drive away other birds. Planting mid and understorey layers also creates more habitat for smaller woodland birds. Bearing in mind that there have been some swift parrots injured or killed by collisions with high mesh fencing, the most recent record from St James Golf Course in September 2007, the participants are very carefully planning the areas to be replanted.

The Threatened Species Network Community Grants have been established to support and inspire community groups to work on the conservation and recovery of threatened species and ecological communities. The Grants fund projects that benefit species or ecological communities that are listed as threatened under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999).

More information regarding TSN grants is available on the website: <http://wwf.org.au/ourwork/species/tsngrants/> where applications may be downloaded.

# The Adventures of Speedy

*It was early summer and in a hole, high in a blue gum tree in eastern Tasmania something was stirring. Four small white eggs were about to hatch! Mother swift parrot had been keeping them warm for the last eighteen days or so and now it was time.*

Inside the eggs Speedy, his brother Sammy and his two sisters Sally and Sarah were wriggling about and wondering, "just how do we get out of here?" Of course it was dark inside the eggs but it was warm and they knew it was time to start cutting through the egg to get out, but what they didn't know was - out into what!

Speedy moved his little head up and down and could feel his sharp egg tooth slicing through the shell of his egg, it was tiring and he soon had to stop and rest. But the job was not over and so he started again and soon the top of the egg fell free and he was able to at least get his head out. He wriggled and twisted and finally came out of the other half of the egg shell.

Something warm and soft was covering him but he couldn't see what it was because his eyes were not yet open and wouldn't be for another ten days! He felt something nuzzle him and this made him feel safe, it was mum. As night passed speedy was feeling hungry! It was a feeling he hadn't felt before because in his egg all his needs for food were taken care of but this was different. Suddenly there was a beak touching his and some sweet nectar was flowing into his mouth, his mother was feeding him and he bobbed his head to get more but mother knew that a little at a time was best for now. By the next morning his sister Sally was also out of her egg and being fed by mum but Sammy and Sarah were still rolling about just taking their time!

Three days soon passed and by this time all the little babies had broken free of their eggs and were balls of white fluff being covered by mum and fed the sweet nectar with sometimes a trace of veggies and insects. "YUK" thought the four babies "just give us the nectar" but mother knows best and to keep the little babies trim they needed to eat more than just the sweet nectar.

As the days passed the white fluff on the four little birds was changing to a much thicker grey fluff and this was keeping them warm when mother was out of the nest hollow gathering food.

*He felt something nuzzle him and this made him feel safe, it was mum.*

Father parrot was never very far away and was also gathering food which he passed on to mother beak to beak so that she didn't need to be away from the babies for too long but as yet he had not seen or fed his babies.

After about six or seven days father swift parrot thought "It's time to see the little chicks and feed them myself," and this he did. Father parrot was now feeding the four little birds much more than mother who needed some time to exercise and feed herself as the last six weeks or so of caring for the eggs and the newly hatched chicks had left her tired.

The little birds eyes were now about to open and for the first time they would see mum and dad. What a

beautiful bird was dad, with his big red face and his little blue cap and all the different shades of green, and his dark red shoulder and purple and blue wing feathers and look at his tail! It was thin and long and was a sort of red on top and grey underneath with the edge feathers of blue. He was handsome. Mother was almost the same except that her colours were a little duller but she was still beautiful.

Time passed quickly and soon the chicks were beginning to sprout some feathers of their own. Speedy and Sammy could see that their green backs were a little darker than Sally and Sarah's but at this time little else was different. The days rolled on very quickly and soon all the little birds were able to scramble to the entrance hole whenever they heard mother or father coming. Of course Speedy was first to the hole because he was the oldest and biggest but after a few days he was pushed aside by Sally and Sammy and Sarah so that everyone got an equal share of the food.

A month soon passed and much wing flapping was happening in the nest which was by now very crowded. Whoever got to flap first meant that the other three had to duck their heads so they didn't get hit by the whirring wings. Everybody got their turn and soon they all felt they would be strong enough when the day came to leave the nest.

They were noticing that mother and father would only give them a little food now and would then move to



*Speedy held his breath, closed his eyes, which wasn't going to help, and dashed out of the nest hole flapping furiously!*

circled the tree where his family was and then wound up the speed! "Slow down" screamed his father, "come here now!!" yelled his mother, "You are an idiot" said Sally and Sarah together. "Once more around the tree at full speed and then I will land" thought

the tree next door. From this tree they would call out "come on you four, come over to us, you can do it." Sally thought "ok here we go" and bounced straight over Sammy and Sarah and out of the nest hole! She flapped her wings very fast and soon could feel herself being thrust forward and upward toward her parents but no one told her how to steer and she crashed into the leaves just a little bit along the branch from them.

Speedy looked out from the nest hole and he looked down! The ground was so far away! "what if I fall?" he cried. "you wont" yelled mum "birds don't fall", "and besides" squealed Sarah "you were the one who did the most flapping in the nest". Speedy held his breath, closed his eyes, which wasn't going to help, and dashed out of the nest hole flapping furiously! By the time he opened his eyes he had missed the tree completely and was heading towards the forest!! He suddenly wasn't scared any more and could feel his wings slicing through the air and pulling him forward at a frightening speed!

He could feel his pointy tail and found that if he moved it a little to one side he turned and to the other side he turned the opposite way. If he dipped his right wing he went right and left wing took him left. "This is great" he thought. "What is hard about this?" Speedy

Speedy as he lined up the branch he was going to land on. But speed was one thing and stopping was another. With his tail fanned to slow him and his wings almost going in reverse he slammed into the same bunch of leaves as Sammy had came straight out the other side and into the next clump!! His father flew over to the leaves and yelled "where are you, you naughty boy?"; His mother had her wings up to her face and couldn't bare to look. "I'm sorry, I won't do it again" squeaked Speedy as he stuck his little red face out of the leaves. "How many times have I heard that before?"; "there has to be one in every clutch". Said his mother. Sally thought he should have been called "Smarty" instead of Speedy.

The Swift Parrot family did not move far from the nest area for a few days until Sammy, Sarah and Sally could fly more confidently and Speedy had settled down and stopped being a show off! They then moved a little further up the coast where the blossoming trees had more nectar and here they met with many other families. Most of the other parents had young birds as well, some had four like Speedy and his sisters and brother and others had three and some had only two. Some of the other birds had no young birds with them and this puzzled Sarah who asked why? "you see"

said the father parrot "some of these birds are single older birds who have lost their partners through injury, old age or some other disaster" he thought for a second and then went on to say "there used to be many more of us than there is today and because the humans are cutting down our blue gum trees there is not enough food to support a large population and so some birds don't have families."

Father continued "life is not easy for us swift parrots and many of us are injured or killed each year when we strike things made by the humans, they have things called cars that can travel much faster than us"; "not faster than me" boasted Speedy, "much faster than you Speedy now be quiet and listen" said his father in a very stern voice. "When these cars are driving along and some of us birds want to cross the roadway we get hit because we fly too low and the cars don't see us." He went on, "The humans also build big nests called houses and the holes in the sides have something called glass in them and it looks like you can fly straight through but you cant because it is solid." "I remember a cousin of mine who tried to fly through one of these things and nearly broke his neck but the humans found him and took him to a place that looks after injured birds and he was saved, he was one of the lucky ones."

The father bird thought he might as well tell them of a few other dangers and mentioned electricity wires and wire fences and things that a fast parrot at full speed might not see, and then there were storms and of course THE CROSSING.

The full story is available from the author, Bill Boyd email: [billboyd@kooee.com.au](mailto:billboyd@kooee.com.au)

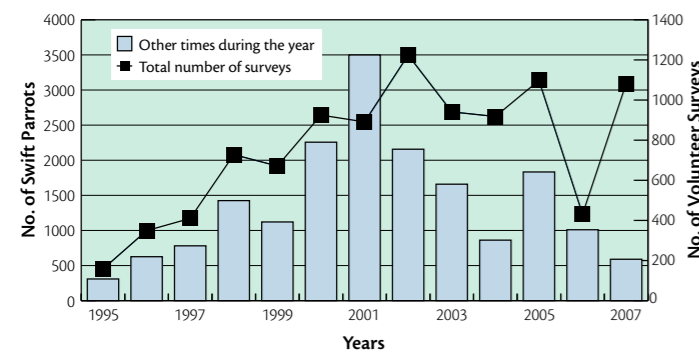
# 2007 Survey Summary

## Introduction:

A total of 1203 surveys were conducted over on the mainland during 2007. Of these surveys 1082 were conducted during the National Survey weekends. During the National Survey weekends a total of 590 Swift Parrots were sighted (385 during the May weekend and 205 during August). Compared to other years this was a relatively low number despite the fact that the number of survey forms received from volunteers was double the amount from last year.

This does not necessarily mean that the numbers of Swift Parrots are decreasing. During 2007 a large number of Swift Parrots were reported outside survey weekend dates. A total of 1749 Swift Parrots were recorded outside the Survey dates. These records are vital as they give a more complete picture of the comparative numbers and over-wintering locations of the birds. All reports from outside the survey dates are added into the database. However, in order to statistically analyse our results, only the information from the survey weekends is included in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Swift Parrot Recovery Program Volunteer Survey Weekend Results 1995-2007



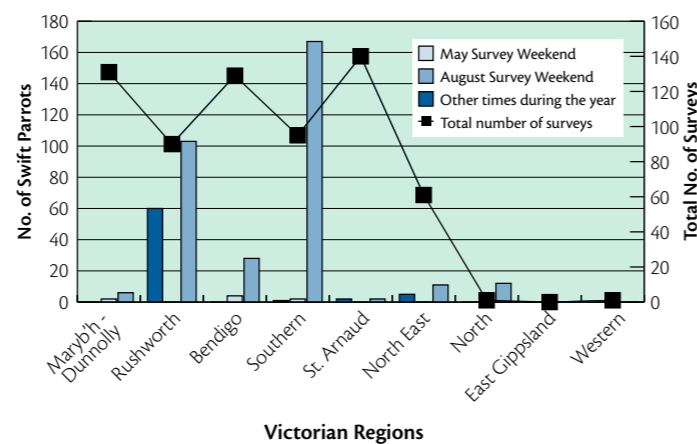
The most striking thing about the 2007 season was the similarity of the birds distribution in 2002. In both years the Central Coast of NSW has been a hotspot for the species. In many respects the climatic conditions of 2002 and 2007 were also very similar. The 2007 conditions across inland Victoria and NSW were very dry, resulting in very little flowering and some die-back or stress in trees. In central Victoria even the numbers of common birds were noticeably very low. Meanwhile coastal eucalyptus, especially the Swamp Mahogany (*Eucalyptus robusta*) had a good flowering season and was able to support large numbers of Swifties. The average flock size recorded from NSW was 19. In comparison the average recorded flock size from Vic was 9.

## Victoria

The majority of Victorian 2007 sightings came from the Southern, Bendigo and Rushworth areas. Birds were predominately sighted outside the survey period in Southern Victoria as these were the earliest records of the season. It appears that the majority of the Swift Parrot population congregated in Southern Victoria and then flew quickly through Central Victoria. The only central locations where birds were recorded for more extended periods of time were generally in wetter and more protected areas.

The largest flock of Swift Parrots recorded from Vic was in the South, near Inverloch where over 70 birds were sighted feeding on Swamp Gum/Black Gum (*E. ovata*) and on lerp from Ribbon Gum (*E. viminalis*).

Figure 2: Victorian Regional Swift Parrot Records 2007 Volunteer Surveys

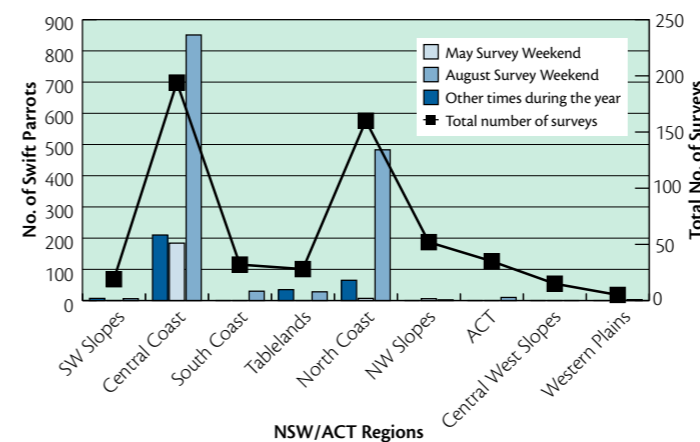


Many thanks to the Victorian volunteers, who despite very low bird numbers in general and severe drought conditions, were able to check these areas for Swift Parrots. It is very useful to know where the birds 'aren't' during a season and why. The Victorian surveys did yield some interesting results with a flock of 47 birds feeding on lerp in regrowth of a forest area burnt in 2006. In a coordinated survey of approximately 40 sites in central Victoria during 2007, the only places Garry Cheers sighted Swift Parrots was in Illawarra and in Paddys Ranges. During the August survey Garry saw only two Swift Parrots which were feeding on flowering Yellow Gum (*E. leucoxydon*).

## NSW/ACT

The Central Coast was certainly the place to see Swift Parrots during the last mainland season. Special thanks to Alan Morris and his highly organised team of birders who kept us informed of sightings over the season. Birds were recorded very early in the season both on the Central and North Coasts, with records of large numbers coming in during early April. The latest records for NSW also came from the Central Coast, with birds still sighted in the Cessnock region into mid-October.

Figure 3: NSW/ACT Regional Swift Parrot Records 2007 Volunteer Surveys



The largest recorded flock of the season came from Kurri Kurri on the Central Coast. Approximately 200 birds were seen feeding together on lerp from Grey Gum (*E. punctata*). Swift Parrots had not been seen in such large numbers on the coast since 2000. However, some of the 2007 sightings were in the same areas or even in the same street trees that the birds were seen in seven years earlier. The main trees utilised on the Central Coast were Swamp Mahogany (*E. robusta*). Moving further up the coast, the main flowering Eucalypt used by Swift Parrots was the Forest Red Gum (*E. tereticornis*). Numbers recorded on the South Coast were very similar to last year with 30 Swift Parrots recorded early in the season, feeding predominately on lerp.

Otherwise, Swift Parrot sightings away from the coast were few. There were some interesting sightings in the North West and Tablelands area, where Swifties were sighted in small numbers moving through Glen Innes and Tamworth in late July- early August. Just north of Armidale a group of approximately 30 birds also fed in flowering Silvertopped Stringybark (*E. laevopinea*), which is the first time they have been recorded feeding in this species.



*Eucalyptus laevopinea* in flower  
Photo by: Belinda Cooke

In the entire South-west Slopes area there was only a single sighting of birds flying overhead in Wagga Wagga. Similarly, in the ACT, there were a couple of brief sightings but the birds were not hanging around. Conditions in these areas were very dry with very little flowering. A small group of three Swift Parrots were sighted in Griffith in late August, this is the most western recording for NSW for the season. Interestingly, there is a scattering of earlier recordings surrounding Griffith, from 1996 up to 2004.

## QLD / SA

The 2007 season saw Swift Parrots in areas of Southern Qld. A total of 16 birds were reported from Kenmore and nearby Indooroopilly as well as Toowoomba and nearby Helidon. All sightings were between early May and mid-July. Previous sightings in Kenmore and Indooroopilly were recorded in June of 2002 and 2004. Previous sightings in Helidon and Toowoomba were during June and July of 2000 and there are also some quite late sightings of August 2000 and September 1998. Most sightings in Queensland over the years are of small flocks of birds. During the 2007 season, the largest flock of Swift Parrots sighted in Qld was of seven birds. However, during July of 2000 a flock of 30 Swift Parrots were seen. There was a single sighting yet to be confirmed for South Australia.

## 2008 Swift Parrot records

The very first mainland record of the 2008 season came from Laurie O'Connor and Tim Fletcher from Newham. This has become a regular first stop over for the parrots over the years and it is great to know that they are still appearing there. Swift Parrots have also been sighted in small numbers in the suburbs of Melbourne and also in Muckleford. Swift Parrots have also been sighted in early April flying over northern ACT near Mount Majura Nature Reserve, where they have been spotted in the past.

Thanks for sending in those early records. Some people have also been touch about the flowering in their area. It seems as though 2008 may be a better flowering year for central Vic and NSW.

# Tasmanian breeding season

Matt Webb from the Tasmanian Dept. of Water and Primary Industries and Janneke Webb from the Tasmanian Conservation Trust have been monitoring Swift Parrots in their breeding habitat in Tasmania. The breeding monitoring program has been running since 2004. In 2007 the project received additional funds from the Threatened Species Network in order to train a number of keen volunteers to assist.

Breeding distribution is restricted to areas of forest that have sufficient nest holes and nearby food trees, primarily Tasmanian Blue Gum (*Eucalyptus globulus*) and Black Gum (*Eucalyptus ovata*). As flowering events vary from year to year, the parrots may not use the same areas in consecutive years. In the four years Matt Webb has been doing field work on the Swift Parrot, few Swift Parrots have returned to nesting sites checked previously.

During the 2007-2008 breeding season a large number of Swift Parrots were recorded in the Southern forests from Huonville down to Southport, an area that had no previous nest records. While most of the population appeared to be in this Southern region, Swift Parrot nesting was also recorded on South Bruny Island, Kelcey Tier near Devonport and on Maria Island.

Swift Parrots have generally been considered to be a dry forest species, however, in the last two breeding seasons the vast majority of the population has been found in wetter forests. These areas of wet forest habitats such as the Southern forests and South Bruny Island appear to be extremely important, particularly when flowering is poor in the drier forests. It is necessary to ensure these wet forest areas are surveyed during breeding seasons to come.

In order to record the numbers of birds and their habitat use over the large Southern forest area, 295 survey sites were set up. Each site was surveyed twice (in early November and again in

December) for 5 minutes. Swift Parrots were recorded during 122 surveys out of a total of 590 surveys. Almost half of all of these records occurred on sites which had tree hollows. Tree hollow formation is dependent on a tree's history, its species and location. It has been estimated that small hollows with narrow entrances which would be suitable for birds such as the Swift Parrot may take about 100 years to form (Mackowski 1984; Menkorst 1984; and Scotts 1991). Within the Southern forests 39 signs of nests and breeding activity were found in old growth forest areas.

The vegetation and presence of flowering Eucalypts was also recorded at each site. A little under half of the sites on which Swift Parrots were recorded had Eucalyptus in moderate to heavy flower. Some patches of flowering Black Gum supported flocks of up to 200 birds. Next to Blue Gum, Black Gum is the most important source of nectar for Swift Parrots during their breeding season. Black Gum flowers from July to October, earlier than Blue Gum which flowers from September to December. The early flowering of Black Gum makes it an important food source when the Swift Parrots first arrive back in Tasmania.

Yearly variations in flowering in Tasmania creates similar difficulties to surveying for the species as on the mainland, although surveying for nest sites in dense wet forest has provided an even bigger challenge due to difficulties in accessing areas and poor



Wet-forest nesting habitat, Tasmania  
Photo by: M. Webb

visibility. Identifying specific calls made by breeding Swift Parrots and chicks have become a valuable survey method in these areas. The monitoring program requires a large number of survey sites spread throughout the breeding zones and the assistance of volunteers is especially necessary in this large-scale approach. As with mainland surveying, it is also important to get information on where the birds are not present in any given year.

It is possible that with further information that areas of the Southern Forests could be protected. Ensuring breeding and foraging habitat for this Endangered bird.

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# Habitat focus Tree species profile

(Information from Brooker, M., and Kleinig, D., 1993, *Field Guide to Eucalyptus: Volume 1 South-eastern Australia*, Inkata Press, Melbourne.) Photos sourced from: Brooker and Kleinig, 1993 and D. Saunders



## Inland: Yellow Gum (*Eucalyptus leucoxylon*)

Also known as Blue Gum and White Ironbark. Found in western Victoria south of the Little Desert to Dartmoor and into south-eastern South Australia. Also found in NSW in one locality near Barham. Small to medium sized tree, bark is mostly smooth with a short stocking of rough bark. White, pink or red flowers during May to September.



## Coastal: Swamp Mahogany (*Eucalyptus robusta*)

Found in a narrow band along the coast from the south coast of NSW up into Queensland north of Rockhampton. A small to medium sized tree which has rough spongy bark all the way up to the smaller branches. Leaves are a dark glossy green. Flowers are white and flowering is quite dependable from May to July each year.

# Bird Counts low in Central Victoria

During the surveys and regular bird watching many residents of central Victoria may have noticed a drop in the numbers of 'common' bird species. Garry Cheers is employed through the Department of Sustainability and Environment, Victoria and coordinates Swift Parrot recovery work from this State. Garry has been busy monitoring Swift Parrots in several sites across their distribution in Victoria, he has recorded some of his findings for common birds during 2007.

The following observations are of 3 common nectar/insectivorous feeding bird species of the Box-Ironbark Forests of Central Victoria. Observations were during Swift Parrot counts in 2006-2007 between Stawell and Chiltern.

Previous seasons had been dry with well below average rain fall and the 2007 season was very dry with no eucalypt flowering. In the 2006-2007 season Garry conducted 277 surveys each covering 1ha.

Fuscous Honeyeaters, normally a Box Ironbark resident, all but disappeared from sites in 2007. White-plumed Honeyeaters were in similar numbers as previous years, but were more wide spread, extending into sites in which they have not been recorded previously. Two hundred and thirty Musk Lorikeets were recorded in 2006 and only 5 in 2007. Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters, another species that I considered may have dropped in numbers, didn't alter as much as the other three species.

In 2007 Fuscous Honeyeaters were recorded in a number of areas outside their normal range, several sightings were south of the dividing range.

Figure 1: No. of sites with each bird species present in 2006 and 2007

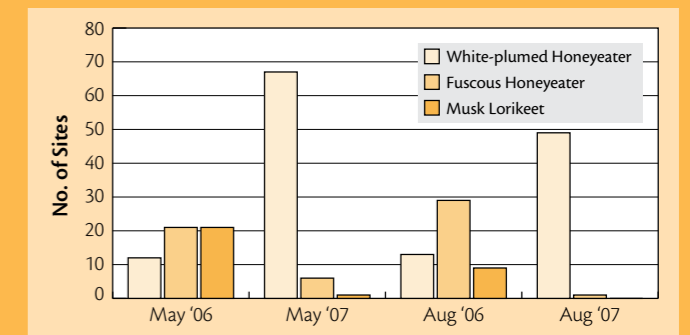
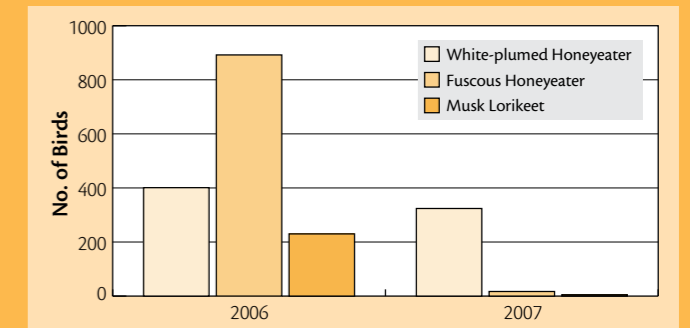


Figure 2: Total number of each bird species recorded in 2006 and 2007



Ed. note –The absence of swift parrots and regent honeyeaters and the general low numbers of other birds in Victoria was shown in survey results and commented on by volunteers:

"At the time of the count, the Heathcote area was extremely quiet, not just for swifties (nil) but for all nectarivorous birds – very few honeyeaters anywhere"  
– John Newman (Highton, Vic).

## Swifties in Burnt Habitat

Garry Cheers

This is a brief report of the only Swift Parrots that I recorded during the 2007 May counts.

In the Illawarra State Forest 122 Swift Parrots were recorded foraging on lerp in Yellow Gums with a diameter at breast height of less than 10cm. There were also 23 Swift Parrots feeding in the Illawarra NCR on lerp on epicormic growth on Yellow Gums and Yellow Box that had been burnt in the January 2006 Stawell fires.

Both these sites are Swift Parrot Priority sites and I wasn't expecting to find Swifties in the burnt area for a number of years.



Burnt habitat in Illawarra  
Photo by: Garry Cheers



Participants at the Moruya workshop on the South Coast of NSW  
Photo by: Bernie Gibson

## Swift Parrot and Regent Honeyeater Workshops 2007

*A number of successful Swift Parrot and Regent Honeyeater workshops were conducted over the birds range in 2007. One day workshops in Inverell and Moruya, in NSW, were the first to be held in these regions.*

The following was written by **Kathleen Davies**, Threatened Species Officer with Department of Environment and Climate Change, who organised the Inverell workshop.

The Inverell workshop attracted around 50 people from the local area as well as from further afield such as Deepwater, Glen Innes, Bingara, Tenterfield, Armidale, Emmaville, Bundarra, Ashford, Delungra and Nullamanna.

The event was very well attended and well received by the community, the audience made up of people from all walks of life including farmers, bird watchers, environmentalists, government organisations, film makers and photographers, nurses, students and business owners.

The main aim of the workshop was to enlist community support for both the threatened Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot, help volunteers develop skills in identification and data recording, and highlight the importance of birds in the ecosystem. The Endangered birds were covered in depth, providing participants with skills on identifying the birds by their calls and sightings through observing their shapes, markings and colours.

Dean Ingwersen, co-ordinator of the Threatened Bird Network for Birds Australia, highlighted the importance of volunteers in the recovery efforts of threatened birds. A fact emphasised by members of several bird watching groups present at the event. Participants were treated to an afternoon field trip to nearby Lake Inverell to practice completing the all important field survey forms associated with these birds, and spent time observing the myriad bird life found at the site. The workshop planners were impressed by the tremendous amount of enthusiasm in the community. Community support is vital in efforts to stop the decline of our valuable species as many exist on or traverse private land.

Following this workshop community interest increased dramatically in efforts to observe, record species numbers and take on project work such as tree planting and remnant protection. Local schools have increased project work and Country Energy has taken on the Regent Honeyeater as a flagship species for a major restoration project north of Ashford, north west NSW. Swift Parrot recordings and sightings have increased and they were sighted in areas previously not seen in for many years.

Within the next six months or so the flowering of Eucalypts in the Northern Slopes area should be bountiful judging by the amount of budding and exceptional rainfall in previous months.

## Calendar of Events

Date	Event	Time	Details	Organisation	Contact
26 April	Swift Parrot and Regent Honeyeater Workshop, Lithgow	10.00am - 4pm			*Regent Honeyeater Recovery Team: Tiffany Mason
2 May	Swift Parrot and Regent Honeyeater Workshop, St Arnaud	10.00am - 4pm		Hosted by North Central CMA	Enquires: Adrian Martins (North Central CMA) Phone: 03 5440 1851
3-4 May	Tree planting, NSW		Capertee Valley, some accommodation and camping	Regent Honeyeater Recovery Team	*Regent Honeyeater Recovery Team: Tiffany Mason
10 May	Swift Parrot and Regent Honeyeater Workshop, Windsor	10.00am - 4pm		Swift Parrot Recovery Team, Regent Honeyeater Recovery Team	*Swift Parrot Recovery Team: Belinda Cooke
17-18 May	Swift Parrot and Regent Honeyeater Survey Weekend		Surveys on mainland	Swift Parrot Recovery Team, Regent Honeyeater Recovery Team	*Swift Parrot Recovery Team: Belinda Cooke (for NSW, QLD, SA and for general enquires) Garry Cheers (for surveys in VIC) Regent Honeyeater Recovery Team
2-3 Aug	Swift Parrot and Regent Honeyeater Survey Weekend		Surveys on mainland	Swift Parrot Recovery Team, Regent Honeyeater Recovery Team	*Swift Parrot Recovery Team: Belinda Cooke (for NSW, QLD, SA and for general enquires) Garry Cheers (for surveys in VIC) Regent Honeyeater Recovery Team
2-3 Aug 16-17 Aug 30-31 Aug 13-14 Sept	Tree planting, Vic		Near Benalla, 2½ hours from Melbourne, free accommodation, BBQ and bushdance	Community Group	Ray Thomas Phone: 03 5761 1515 Email: Raydavidthomas@hotmail.com
16-17 Aug	Tree planting, NSW		Capertee Valley, some accommodation and camping	Regent Honeyeater Recovery Team	*Regent Honeyeater Recovery Team: Tiffany Mason
4-5 Oct	Lurg Bird Surveys		Near Benalla, 2½ hours from Melbourne	Birds Australia	Dean Ingwersen, TBN coordinator Phone: 03 9347 0757 Email: d.ingwersen@birdsaustralia.com.au

Please start thinking about where you intend to survey during the 2008 survey weekends. If you would like to find out new areas to survey in your local area or places that have not been covered in previous survey efforts, get in touch with the relevant coordinator for your state.

### Contact details:

**Swift Parrot Recovery Team:**  
Belinda Cooke (for NSW, QLD, SA and for general enquires)  
Freecall: 1800 66 57 66  
Phone: 02 6298 9733  
Email: swiftparrots@yahoo.com.au

**Garry Cheers** (for surveys in VIC)  
Phone: 03 5461 2970  
Email: Garry\_Cheers@yahoo.com.au

**Matt Webb** (for Tas and enquires about nesting biology)  
Phone: 03 6233 6952  
Email: Matthew.Webb@dpiw.tas.gov.au

**Regent Honeyeater Recovery Team:**  
David Geering / Tiffany Mason  
Freecall: 1800 621 056  
Email: Tiffany.Mason@environmnet.nsw.gov.au



Photo by: G. Dabb

## DVD

In late 2007 a documentary of the Swift Parrot was completed. The 6 minute documentary introduces the Swift Parrot through a commentary about its migratory lifestyle and the tree species it depends upon. A highlight is the excellent footage largely supplied by Geoffrey Dabb.

The DVD may be viewed through the internet at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aFVjHe1DMYA>.

Or go to <http://www.youtube.com> and type 'swift parrot' in the search field.

**Alternatively you can contact Belinda Cooke or Debbie Saunders, Mainland Swift Parrot Coordinator by email: [swiftparrots@yahoo.com.au](mailto:swiftparrots@yahoo.com.au) or phone: 1800 66 57 66 and order a copy.**

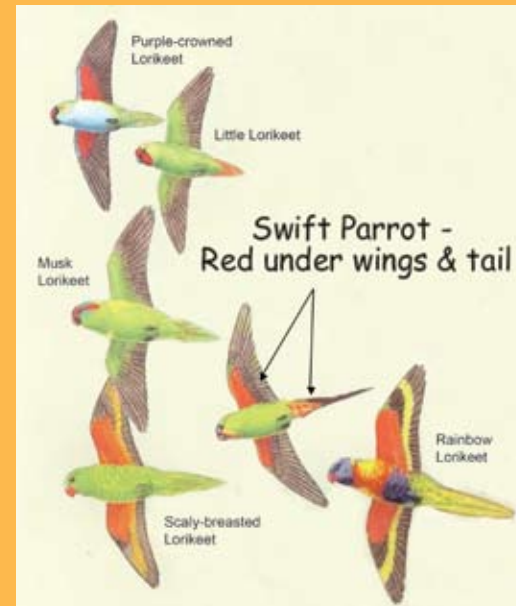
# Musk Lorikeets in NSW

This season many volunteers in NSW commented on the abundance of Musk Lorikeets:

"Lots of Musk Lorikeets here this time. When flying with Rainbow Lorikeets about one third are Musks – easy to pick out. The blossoms are first class this year and still plenty around"  
- Sheila Shipton (Callala Beach, NSW)

"The trees in this area are large blackbutts, some over one hundred feet in height... there was no blossom so we are assuming that the food source was lerp. One swift parrot was seen to fly from one tree to another and was immediately chased by a bell miner. There was no calling!! One bird called as it flew to another tree but even this call was very soft. It was as though they did not want to be found! Less than 200m away next to the road, swamp mahogany is in full flower and is hosting many Musk Lorikeets which are in

unbelievable numbers in the whole Lake Macquarie area."  
- Bill Boyd (Belmont North, NSW)



Swift Parrot and Lorikeet Identification, taken from Simpson and Day (1996)

## Contributions for bird book

A unique form of bird book is in the planning. Titled 'Birds and People', the book is a joint project with BirdLife International and the coordinator is asking for contributions from people all over the world.

Everyone who contributes will be acknowledged. You can contribute in a number of ways, through stories on any birdy topic you are interested, or through the on-line forum. The coordinator of this project, Mark Cocker, has also included a list of particular topics on which they would like contributions. Under the topic list for Australasia, they have included the Swift Parrot.

**If you would like to contribute or check out this project, have a look at the website: <http://www.birdsandpeople.org>. To send on stories email Mark Cocker on: Email: [markcocker@randomhouse.co.uk](mailto:markcocker@randomhouse.co.uk)**

Please send all newsletter contributions and Swift Parrot records to the Recovery Team: Swift Parrot Recovery Coordinator, PO Box 2115 Queanbeyan, NSW 2620. Freecall: 1800 66 57 66 Email: [swiftparrots@yahoo.com.au](mailto:swiftparrots@yahoo.com.au)

Special thanks to the Treatedened Species Network for supporting the Swift Parrot Recovery Program.

Newsletter editor – Belinda Cooke. This newsletter is printed on Australian made, 100% recycled paper.

