

Global bird conservation effort lifts off

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A massive international campaign is set to launch, intended to save the 189 bird species that face extinction.

BirdLife International, a worldwide bird science and conservation umbrella group, will next week unveil what it calls the largest bird conservation program the world has ever seen, at Birdfest -- a British festival for avian enthusiasts -- The (London) Independent reported Sunday.

Under the program -- "Preventing Extinctions: Saving the World's Most Threatened Birds" -- each of the species will be assigned a local "species guardian" to work with international groups to carry out conservation efforts, and a "species champion," a corporation or group to fund the efforts.

The need for the effort -- which comes with an estimated \$40 million price tag -- is dire, organizers said. In the past 30 years, 21 bird species have gone extinct and the list of species facing extinction is growing faster than ever before.

Bird conservation is not hopeless, the newspaper said. Conservationists say 16 species were saved from extinction between 1994 and 2004 -- including the Norfolk Island green parrot, which was down to four breeding females but now has a population of 200 to 300.

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