

Tasmania's swift parrot now facing population collapse

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Swift parrot juvenile. Credit: Dejan Stojanovic

The iconic Tasmanian swift parrot is facing population collapse and could become extinct within 16 years, new research has found.

The researchers have called on the Federal Government to list the birds as critically endangered.

"Swift parrots are in far worse trouble than anybody previously thought," said leader of the study, Professor Robert Heinsohn, from The

Australian National University (ANU).

"Everyone, including foresters, environmentalists and members of the public will be severely affected if they go extinct," said Professor Heinsohn from the ANU Fenner School of Environment and Society.

Swift parrots are major pollinators of blue and black gum trees which are crucial to the forestry industry, which controversially continues to log swift parrot habitat.

The five-year study discovered that swift parrots move between different areas of Tasmania each year to breed, depending on where food is available.

The new data was combined with a previous study that showed that swift [parrots](#) are preyed on heavily by sugar gliders, especially in deforested areas.

The research predicted that the population of the birds will halve every four years, with a possible decline of 94.7 per cent over 16 years.

A moratorium on logging in swift parrot habitat is needed until new plans for their protection can be drawn up, said co-researcher, Dr Dejan Stojanovic, also from ANU Fenner School.



Swift parrot female. Credit: Dejan Stojanovic

"Current approaches to swift parrot management look rather inadequate," he said.

"Our models are a wake-up call. Actions to preserve their forest habitat cannot wait."

The research has been published in the latest edition of *Biological Conservation*.

Provided by Australian National University

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