

Australian parrots need more protection

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Palm cockatoo. Credit: C.N. Zdenek

Australia has the world's highest diversity of parrots, but a new analysis by researchers at The Australian National University (ANU) has found the nation's record in conserving these beautiful birds leaves much to be desired.

Professor Rob Heinsohn, from the ANU Fenner School of Environment and Society, said Australia was the third worst performing country when

it came to the risks of parrot extinction.

Professor Heinsohn co-authored a report that looked at factors causing extinction risk among [parrots](#) around the world. The study compared the circumstances of all 398 parrot species worldwide and then ranked their risk of extinction.

"Our analysis shows that Australia is the third highest priority country for parrot conservation after Indonesia and Brazil, and by far the highest-ranked among developed [countries](#)," Professor Heinsohn said.

"Australia's high ranking is a two-edged sword really. On the one hand it reflects the extraordinary number of unique parrot species we have here, but it also shows that a high proportion of them are threatened with extinction."

Professor Heinsohn said [extinction risk](#) for parrots was linked to economic development. Parrots in fast developing countries were most endangered.

"All but two of the countries in the worst performing 20 are developing countries. As wealthy nations, Australia at number three and New Zealand at 15 should be very concerned by this assessment," Professor Heinsohn said.

"To date, we've only really applied band-aid solutions to keeping our rare parrots from going extinct. But that does not solve the underlying environmental problems that cause their low numbers."

He said Australia needed more research and investment in parrot conservation.

The authors were able to demonstrate that larger long-lived parrots are

especially vulnerable as are those that depend on the world's dwindling forests.

More information: George Olah et al. Ecological and socio-economic factors affecting extinction risk in parrots, *Biodiversity and Conservation* (2016). [DOI: 10.1007/s10531-015-1036-z](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10531-015-1036-z)

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