

Media Release

The Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP

Minister for Energy, the Environment and Climate Change
Minister for Solar Homes



Sunday, 8 May 2022

RENEWED HOPE FOR CRITICALLY ENDANGERED FAUNAL EMBLEM

The Andrews Labor Government is securing the future of the critically endangered Helmeted Honeyeater, with 18 birds moved into their new forest home today.

Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change Lily D'Ambrosio celebrated the release the birds into a special patch of forest within Yarra Ranges National Park, which houses one of two wild populations of the state's faunal emblem.

Only 250 Helmeted Honeyeaters currently exist in the wild.

Coming from a Healesville Sanctuary breeding program, the birds join the 32 Helmeted Honeyeaters that founded the second site east of Warburton in August last year.

The new habitat is crucial to the Helmeted Honeyeater's survival, as it increases genetic diversity, protects the species against disease and environmental disasters such as bushfire.

Since 1989, the combined efforts of the Victorian Government and a host of conservation partners has prevented the extinction of this charismatic bird and seen the last remaining wild population grow from just 25 to 250 birds.

Three chicks have already successfully hatched into the new wild population, raising hopes for the long-term survival of the species.

The new residents have been fitted with tiny radio transmitters so they can be closely monitored. Later this month, several more birds bred at Healesville Sanctuary will also be released at Yellingbo Nature Conservation Area to further increase genetic diversity.

The Helmeted Honeyeater is a Victorian faunal emblem, along with the Leadbeater's possum, with the Labor Government contributing \$2 million via the Faunal Emblems Program from 2021 to 2023.

Since 2018, almost \$4 million in funding has been dedicated to improving the long-term sustainability of the Helmeted Honeyeater and Leadbeater's possum.

The Government has invested over \$560 million towards protecting biodiversity since 2014 – more than any other in Victorian history.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Lily D'Ambrosio

"To see this rare bird in the wild is truly remarkable, and a sight future generations of Victorians should be able to witness one day."

"We're making record investments into biodiversity, regenerating our precious native species and restoring habitats to ensure our faunal emblem can flourish in the wild once more."

Quote attributable to Zoos Victoria Senior Ecologist, Dr Dan Harley

"It's a privilege to be able to release 18 of these critically endangered Victorian birds into their new wild habitat, and we are all excited to see them produce more fledglings later this year."

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