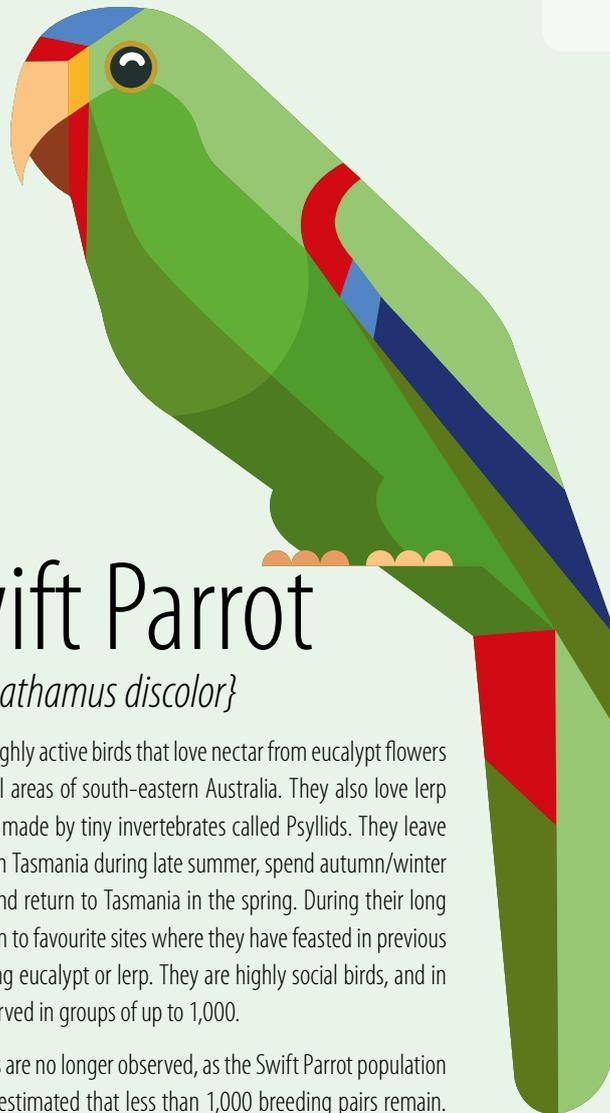


Threatened Fauna of the Hunter & Mid Coast

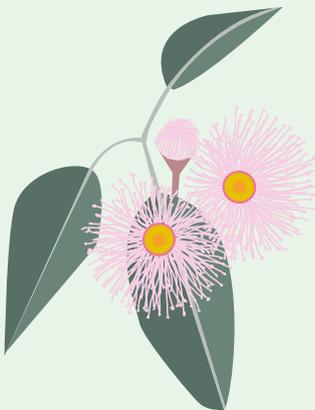


Swift Parrot

{Lathamus discolor}

Swift Parrots are agile, highly active birds that love nectar from eucalypt flowers in woodland and coastal areas of south-eastern Australia. They also love lerp – the sugary excretions made by tiny invertebrates called Psyllids. They leave their breeding grounds in Tasmania during late summer, spend autumn/winter on mainland Australia and return to Tasmania in the spring. During their long journey, they often return to favourite sites where they have feasted in previous years on prolific flowering eucalypt or lerp. They are highly social birds, and in the past have been observed in groups of up to 1,000.

Sadly, these large groups are no longer observed, as the Swift Parrot population is in heavy decline. It is estimated that less than 1,000 breeding pairs remain. The main threats to Swift Parrots are native forest logging, urban coastal development, loss of nesting habitat and predation by Sugar Gliders in breeding habitat in Tasmania. Swift Parrots need to have reliable food sources (flowering eucalypts and lerp) when they reach NSW in order to rebuild their energy stores after their long migration along the east coast.



By protecting habitat for the Swift Parrot, you will also help many other native species that live in similar habitats across our forests and woodlands.

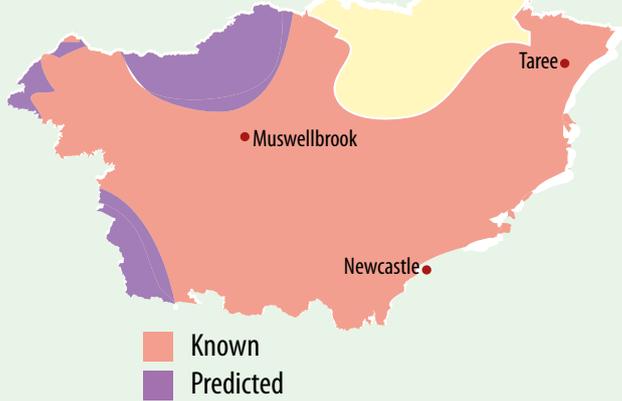


Local Land
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We help secure the future of agriculture and the environment for NSW communities

Hunter and Mid Coast region



The areas shown in pink and purple are the sub-regions where the species or community is, or known to occur. They may not occur throughout the sub-region but may be restricted to certain areas. The information presented in this map is only indicative and may contain errors and omissions.

Are Swift Parrots found near you?

The Swift Parrot is endemic to south-eastern Australia, breeding only in Tasmania during spring and summer. It migrates to mainland Australia in the autumn and winter months, ranging from Victoria and the eastern parts of South Australia to south-east Queensland. In NSW it mostly occurs on the coast and south west slopes.

Within the Hunter and Mid Coast regions, Swift Parrots have been found to forage regularly in Spotted Gum and Swamp Mahogany forests, with ongoing records around Cessnock and Kurri Kurri. Exact sites known to support Swift Parrot include the Hunter Economic Zone, Werakata National Park/State Conservation Area, coal mining lands (in lower Hunter), areas nearby to Port Stephens and southern Lake Macquarie. Several areas have been declared as "Key Biodiversity Areas" (KBAs) for Swift Parrots in the Cessnock, Lake Macquarie, Greater Blue Mountains and Mudgee-Wollar areas.



Why is this species important?

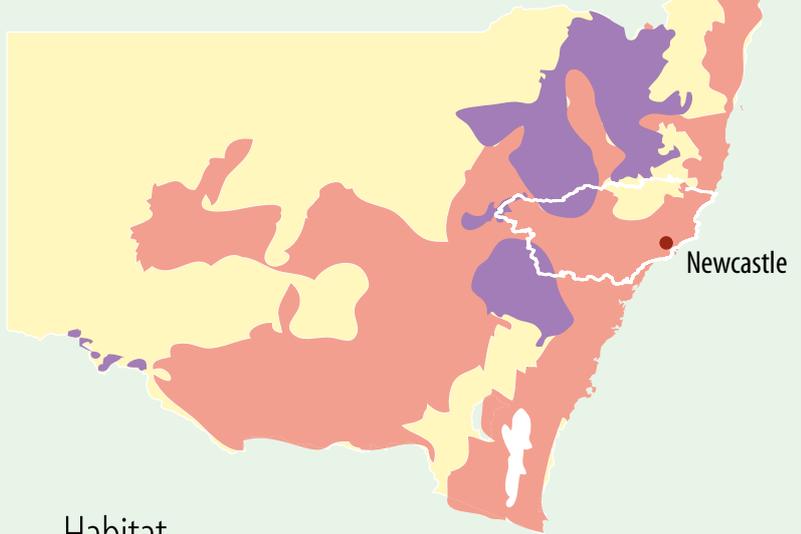
Swift Parrots migrate the longest distance of any parrot in the world.

Being the only member of the genus *Lathamus* (named after British ornithologist John Latham) the Swift Parrot is of high conservation significance.

As a forest and woodland dependent bird, the Swift Parrot is a high profile species associated with the conservation of these habitats. Habitats used by Swift Parrots support a diversity of other wildlife including at many native bird species, threatened animals, numerous threatened plant species and endangered ecological communities. The Regent Honeyeater (also critically endangered) also shares similar habitat ranges and threats as the Swift Parrot in the Hunter and Mid Coast regions.

The Swift Parrot is listed as endangered in NSW and critically endangered under Commonwealth legislation. In 2015, it was listed under the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as critically endangered as research suggested it could become extinct by 2031, due mainly to the new threat of Sugar Gliders in Tasmania.

NSW Distribution of Swift Parrot



Habitat

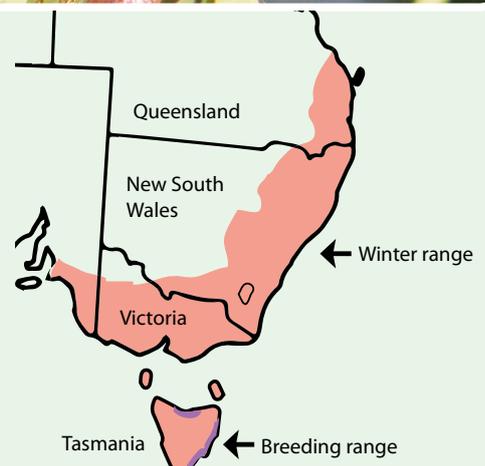
On mainland Australia, Swift Parrots are found in dry sclerophyll forests including Spotted Gum, Swamp Mahogany, Ironbark, Grey Gum and Blackbutt dominated vegetation. Swift Parrots roost communally, often in the same tree each night and only come to the ground to drink from puddles.

In the lower Hunter, Swift Parrots forage on the following tree species: Swamp Mahogany (*Eucalyptus robusta*), Forest Red Gum (*E. tereticornis*), Blackbutt (*E. pilularis*) and Spotted Gum (*Corymbia maculata*). Less common forage species include and Brown Stringybark (*E. capitellata*).

Within the upper Hunter key species include White Box (*E. albens*), Mugga Ironbark (*E. sideroxylon*), Yellow Box (*E. melliodora*). A number of ecological communities that provide habitat for the Swift Parrot have been listed as threatened, such as Swamp sclerophyll forest on floodplains, dominated by Swamp Mahogany and Lower Hunter Spotted Gum – Ironbark forest, dominated by the distinctive Spotted Gum, and Ironbarks, and Box-Gum Grassy Woodland, dominated by Yellow Box.



Mugga Ironbark flower, courtesy John Hodge



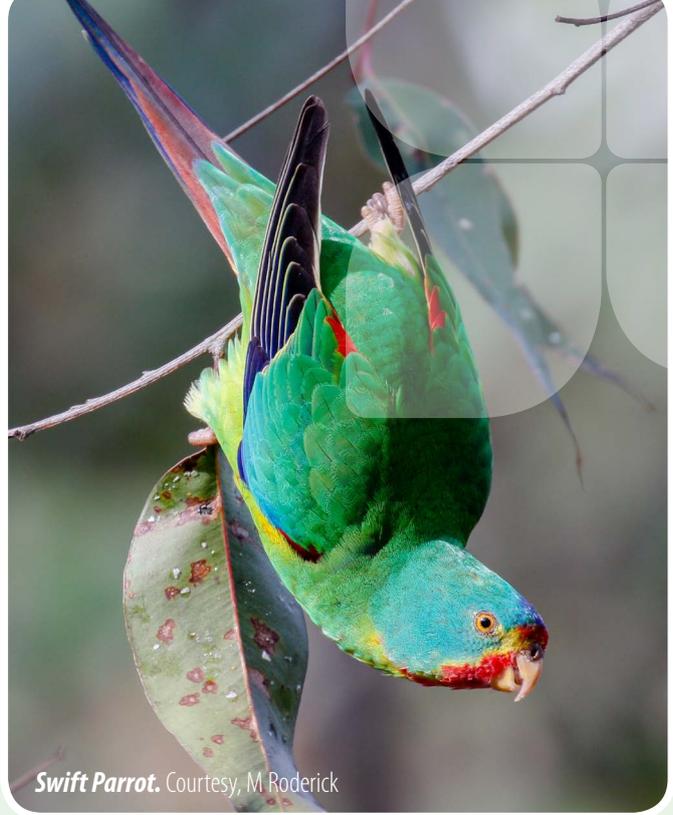
Identification

The Swift Parrot is mostly bright green in colour, with dark-blue patches on the crown, a prominent red face, and the chin and throat are narrowly bordered with yellow. It is approximately 25 cm in length, the wingspan is 32 to 36 cm and it weighs about 65g. It is a slim, medium-sized parrot with angular pointed wings and a slender tail giving it the characteristic streamlined flight-silhouette.

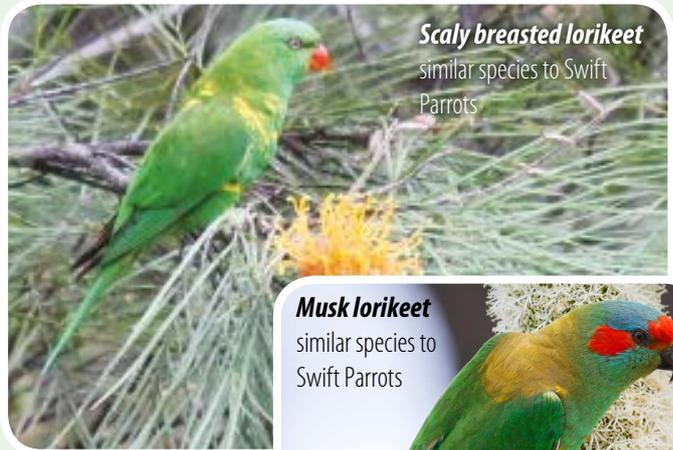
Swift Parrots can often be confused with lorikeets such as Scaly breasted Lorikeet and Musk Lorikeets but the prominent red patches under the wing, long pointed dusky red tail and bright green body are distinctive, as is its loud flute-like chirruping or metallic “kik-kik-kik” call, which is very different to the short trills of lorikeets.

Threats

- Habitat loss and degradation, including the loss of preferred tree species
- Lack of regeneration or seedlings of feed trees
- Reduction in food resources due to drought
- Changes in available habitat and range due to climate change
- Feral animals including cats and foxes
- Collision mortality with vehicles and houses (windows)
- Weed impacts on native vegetation
- Aggression and competition of Noisy Miners excluding Swift Parrots from woodland habitat
- Resource competition by introduced bees within feeding areas
- Psittacine Beak and Feather Disease
- In Tasmania, predation by introduced sugar gliders (*Petaurus breviceps*) and loss of nesting hollows is having a significant impact on breeding Swift Parrots



Swift Parrot. Courtesy, M Roderick



Scaly breasted lorikeet
similar species to Swift Parrots



Musk lorikeet
similar species to Swift Parrots



Noisy Miners are an aggressive native competitor. Courtesy Oystercatcher.



Swift Parrot, Button-Quail Junction. Courtesy, M Roderick

You can help Swift Parrots.



1. **Retain and enhance stands of winter flowering feed trees**, particularly mature adult trees.



2. **Allow for regeneration or plant canopy trees where appropriate**, contact your local native nursery for appropriate species.



3. **Practice strategic grazing to fence and protect native vegetation**, and improve the health and encourage natural regeneration of eucalypt seedlings.



4. **Control weeds competing with native vegetation**, to improve the health of bushland or woodland areas.



5. **Reduce collisions in areas where Swift Parrots** are foraging by closing window blinds or letting windows get dirty. Alternatively hang wind chimes, mobiles etc in front of windows. Hang strips of fabric across wire mesh fences. Drive carefully to avoid colliding with wildlife.



6. **Responsible pet ownership** to prevent pet cats preying on native birds.



7. **Undertake fox control** through coordinated management programs.



8. **Support and get involved** with natural resource management organisations and groups like BirdLife Australia, Hunter Local Land Services, Landcare, or the Hunter Bird Observers Club.



9. **Participate in surveys** to locate the winter foraging flocks of Swift Parrots. Each year the Swift Parrot Recovery Team relies on the involvement of volunteers to identify areas the birds are visiting and what habitats they are using. This information directly helps the recovery effort for this species. Surveys are conducted twice a year and aim to cover the migratory winter range of this species. Mainland surveys are held on the 3rd weekend in May and the first weekend in August and are coordinated by BirdLife Australia.



10. **Report sightings** to BirdLife Australia, to contribute valuable information on their current status and range. BirdLife Australia maintains a mainland sightings database and every record is important.



11. **Share the joy!** Join a local bird watching group, take friends and family bird watching, or head out on the bird routes mapped in the region — many of the bird route sites are part of old drovers trails known as Travelling Stock Reserves; also called the “the long paddock”. See which birds you can spot and teach others about the importance of looking after our wildlife.



Courtesy M Rodderick

Birding routes in the Hunter Region can be found at
<https://www.hboc.org.au/resources/birding-routes/>

For more information contact

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P: 1300 795 299

E: admin.hunter@lls.nsw.gov.au

W: www.hunter.lls.nsw.gov.au

Office of Environment and Heritage:

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E: info@environment.nsw.gov.au

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Manning - Lyn Booth

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E: lyn@manninglandcare.org

Manning Coastcare - Pieta Laing

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E: pieta.manningcoastcare@gmail.com

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Hunter Region Landcare Network Inc.

Lower Hunter - Stacy Mail

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E: lowerhunterlandcare@gmail.com

Upper Hunter - Paul Melehan

P: 0408 499 838

E: upperhunterlandcare@gmail.com

W: <https://hunterlandcare.org.au/>

Report sightings to BirdLife Australia:

Freecall: 1300 621 056 E: dean.ingwersen@birdlife.org.au or
mick.roderick@birdlife.org.au

W: www.birdlife.org.au / info@birdlife.org.au



National
Landcare
Program



This project is supported Hunter LLS, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

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Published March 2019

