



A Swift Parrot at the entrance of its nest.

Swift Parrots Face Introduced Predators AND GOVERNMENT INTRANSIGENCE

By Dr. David Waugh, Director, Loro Parque Fundación
Photos by Dejan Stojanovic

The Loro Parque Fundación is supporting a project to help the world's most migratory psittacine, the Swift Parrot (*Lathamus discolor*). Like many other parrot species, the Swift Parrot is progressively losing its forest habitat, both within breeding grounds in Tasmania, and the wintering range in mainland south-east Australia. It is included in the Red List of Threatened Species of the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) as 'Endangered'; and the project has revealed that its situation is worsening; and the total population might not exceed 2,000 individuals.



Above: An infra-red photo at night of a Sugar Glider entering the nest of a Swift Parrot. Right: Dead female Swift Parrots predated by Sugar Gliders.



Dr. Robert Heinsohn of the Fenner School of Environment and Society, Australian National University, and his team have documented the parrot's biology and ecology in relation to land management practices, especially forestry. The researchers found that all Swift Parrot nests are located in tree-cavities with very specific characteristics. Furthermore, there is a serious level of predation of females inside the nests by arboreal sugar gliders (*Petaurus breviceps*), introduced into Tasmania from mainland Australia. Meanwhile, continued logging of native forest further reduces its potential habitat.

The federal government is considering an urgent bid by Dr. Heinsohn to list the bird as 'Critically Endangered'. An inter-governmental Swift Parrot recovery team is now trying to map out ways to save the species; but the state which is missing from the team is Tasmania. There is an urgent need for Tasmania's environment agency to be actively involved in recovery process, but the Tasmanian government has not provided a reason for its lack of participation. Documents released in March showed that the Tasmanian government ignored the advice of its own experts, and is allowing the logging of Swift Parrot habitat. However, the Tasmanian government has said that it is committed to the protection of the Swift Parrot, including protection of 968,000 hectares of its habitat across Tasmania. In September, the Threatened Species Scientific Committee of Australia is expected to advise on whether or not the species will be listed as 'Critically Endangered'.

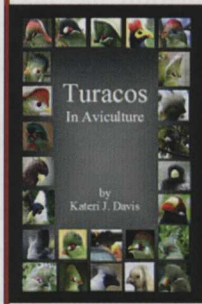
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