



# PROTECTING OUR NATIVE WILDLIFE

## The road to recovery for threatened species

### Precious and protected

Australians love our precious native wildlife, but it's under threat as never before. We have one of the worst mammal extinction rates in the world, but we can turn around our biodiversity crisis. The Greens will deliver strong protections for our wildlife, and a \$2 billion Biodiversity Fund to reverse the damage.

Australia is recognised globally as "mega-diverse" - over 80% of mammals, reptiles and flowering plants exist only in Australia. But Australia's wildlife is facing an extinction crisis. Many of our famous and important animals and plants are in danger of becoming extinct.

The latest State of the Environment Report (2011) reported declines in many of our mammal species in all states, with the situation continuing to deteriorate. Overall, more than 1,700 species of animals and plants are listed by the federal government as being at risk of extinction.

### > Key points

The Greens have a **\$2.13 billion plan over 6 years** (\$1.13 billion over 4 years) to fix our biodiversity crisis and provide real funding for nature. We will:

- **Protect our unique native wildlife** by investing \$130 million over 4 years in a *Threatened Species Plan* to map and protect critical habitat and to fund existing, unfunded recovery plans.
- **Re-establish the Biodiversity Fund and double the previous funding** with \$2 billion over 6 years to expand our protected areas, stop the loss of native wildlife, and better manage our established national parks, forests and reserves.

### > Protecting our native wildlife

The Greens will chart the road to recovery for Australia's threatened species and ecosystems by strengthening protection for our threatened species across Australia's landscapes.

Remarkably, for all too many of our threatened species their critical habitats are not even properly mapped, let alone protected. And for many species we are on track to lose them before we even know they exist – so much more research is needed to understand our native species and what they need to survive. Our threatened species don't just include obscure critters – Australia's iconic species like koalas, wombats and

bilbies in Queensland and New South Wales, Leadbeater's Possums in Victoria, Swift Parrots and Tasmanian devils in Tasmania are in serious decline. Often "recovery plans" are in place, but they have no dedicated funding, and the loss of our wildlife continues.

**The Greens' *Threatened Species Plan* will identify and protect important habitat, and increase funding for threatened species management and research.** Our 4 year, \$130 million plan will:

- Provide \$30 million per year for 3 years to:
  - Fund comprehensive studies to **identify and map important habitat nationally**, including protected ecological communities, areas of critical habitat for threatened species and important wildlife corridors;
  - **Protect that habitat through bioregional plans** that guide development and establish **clear no-go zones** for different activities such as development and mining within each region across Australia. These bioregional plans would be developed in partnership with state and local governments where possible, and rolled out progressively with priority on high risk biodiversity areas;
- Provide \$10 million per year over 4 years to:
  - Support the **rapid listing** of all species and ecological communities which belong on the threatened list;
  - **Develop and fund the implementation of recovery plans** and threat abatement plans for listed species and ecological communities;
  - Fund **additional research** required to help turn around Australia's biodiversity decline;

Our \$130 million *Threatened Species Plan* will be supplemented by additional funding from the restored and doubled \$2 billion Biodiversity Fund.

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## > \$2 billion Biodiversity Fund to expand and restore protected areas

Never before in history has our natural environment been threatened with such degradation from global warming, mining, logging, tree clearing and unsustainable land use. Our precious places need protection, and we must re-connect patches of critical habitat to allow our native wildlife to thrive.

The Greens will **re-establish and double the Biodiversity Fund, which was axed by the Coalition, with \$2 billion in funding over 6 years and the first \$1 billion to be injected immediately.**

The Biodiversity Fund will support a program to **expand and better manage our World Heritage Areas, national parks, Indigenous Protected Areas and private land conservation.** It will help to expand our National Reserve System by thousands of hectares every year. The Fund will focus in part on projects with a double benefit – both carbon storage and biodiversity outcomes.

**Private landholders have a crucial role** in protecting the last remaining sections of certain habitats like coastal rainforests or inland grassy box woodland which are nowadays found mostly on private land. As part of the Greens' plan, the Department of Environment make recommendations for options to use incentives in the tax system for private landholders to improve the health and extent of ecosystems under their stewardship, and to protect land in perpetuity. These recommendations should include mechanisms for securing ongoing funds for stewardship activities like weed control into the future.

*For example, landholders of ecologically significant land who place a 'conservation covenant' over their land to protect it in perpetuity could claim a tax deduction equal to the value of any land use rights effectively given up.*

The Biodiversity Fund will help to stop the devastating loss of our native wildlife by supplementing the Greens' *Threatened Species Plan*.

Tony Abbott axed the original \$946 million Biodiversity Fund in 2014 after it had already been cut by 50% by the former Labor government. Under the Greens plan, the Biodiversity Fund would be safeguarded for future generations by entrenching funding in legislation just like we did with funding for the Australian Renewable Energy Agency and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, which the Greens pushed successfully to establish in the last Parliament.

Some examples of projects funded under the former Biodiversity Fund include:<sup>i</sup>

*Bringing the forest back to the farm* – in north Queensland, universities, farmers, conservationists and the local community worked together to bring back native forest to weed-affected farmland, creating more habitat for wildlife, better soil and water for farmers, and extra income from

carbon farming. **Details:** \$2.2 million, targeting 600 ha of land, helping 120 landholders.

*Bio-links connect a fragmented landscape* – in South West Victoria, crucial connecting corridors were created between key habitat for over 100 threatened species, including the southern brown bandicoot and yellow belly glider. **Details:** \$2.5 million, reconnecting 680 ha of key habitat.

*Large-scale restoration* - in Tasmania a coalition of groups worked on bringing the Midlands' dry native grassland back from the brink, restoring the mere 3% which remains. **Details:** \$2.4 million, restoring 1000 ha per year.

*River Rescue* - in southern Queensland, locals regenerated a 20 km stretch of the Condamine River degraded by floods and land clearing, supporting landholders and reintroducing native species. **Details:** \$348,000, restoring 200 ha of riparian land.

This commitment is in addition to the Greens' plan under our [Investing in Innovative Agriculture](#) initiative to boost Landcare funding by \$722 million over 4 years, thus reversing Tony Abbott and Malcolm Turnbull's harsh cuts.

## > The Greens' track record on protecting wildlife

The Greens were founded on the vision of a robust and healthy environment, and that vision continues today. We are working hard to protect our native wildlife and wild places in the Parliament. The Greens have already achieved some significant victories in the Parliament. We have:

- Worked successfully to block the **Abbott/Turnbull plans to hand over the 'water trigger'** and other Federal environmental powers to protect native wildlife to irresponsible State, Territory and local governments. By negotiating with other parties and cross-bench Senators the Greens stood up for our national environmental laws.
- Secured the creation of the **original \$946 million Biodiversity Fund** under the former Labor government, funding communities to restore bushland and native habitats and reduce the impacts of weeds and feral animals.
- **Introduced private members' bills** to ensure federal environment powers are not handed to the States, and allow emergency listing of threatened species.
- Initiated a **Senate Inquiry into koalas** which resulted in threatened species listing for this national icon.
- Initiated a Senate inquiry into **threatened species management** across Australia, which highlighted the considerable concern of the community and experts alike for the plight of our native fauna and the need for strong federal leadership to protect the environment.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.environment.gov.au/cleanenergyfuture/biodiversity-fund/case-studies/index.html>