



Saving our superb parrot

A habitat restoration project in regional New South Wales

Acknowledgement of Country

Department of Climate Change,
Energy, the Environment and
Water acknowledges the
Traditional Custodians of the
lands where we work and live.

We pay our respects to Elders
past, present and emerging.

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Artist and designer Nikita Ridgeway from Aboriginal
design agency Boss Lady Creative Designs created the
People and Community symbol.

Photos:

Cover photo: Superb parrot (David Ingram/DCCEEW)
Page Page 3: Female superb parrot in tree hollow (David
Parker/DCCEEW); Page 11: Female superb parrot (Helen
Fallow/DCCEEW)

Published by:

Environment and Heritage

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment
and Water

Locked Bag 5022, Parramatta NSW 2124

Phone: +61 2 9995 5000 (switchboard)

Phone: 1300 361 967 (Environment and Heritage enquiries)

TTY users: phone 133 677, then ask for 1300 361 967

Speak and listen users: phone 1300 555 727, then ask for
1300 361 967

Email: info@environment.nsw.gov.au

Website: www.environment.nsw.gov.au

ISBN 978-1-76186-256-4

EH 2026/0220

July 2026

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An iconic threatened parrot

The superb parrot (*Polytelis swainsonii*) is a fast-flying green parrot that inhabits inland grassy woodlands and riparian red gum forests of temperate and semi-arid New South Wales (see Figure 1). It has captured the attention and hearts of regional community members, particularly landholders, over the last 3 decades.

Superb parrots occur across much of inland New South Wales, from northern Victoria to the Queensland border (see Figure 1). In New South Wales, records are concentrated along the Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers, and in the South West Slopes between Wagga Wagga and Orange. They are also recorded in large numbers in the Australian Capital Territory.

A true 'landscape species', the superb parrot has the capacity to move long distances to and from breeding and foraging sites at different times of the year. However, some birds are recorded all year round at the same sites.

The superb parrot lives in woodlands and forests along rivers and creeks. These habitats also support many other threatened and declining woodland birds. Protecting superb parrot habitat will also help these birds and the ecosystems they rely on.

In the last 5 years, research into the superb parrot's flight patterns by the Difficult Birds Group at the Australian National University has collected important movement data, but we still have much to learn to determine where to target habitat protection and restoration. What we do know is the species relies on large old living and dead eucalypt trees with hollows, where they breed between September and December.

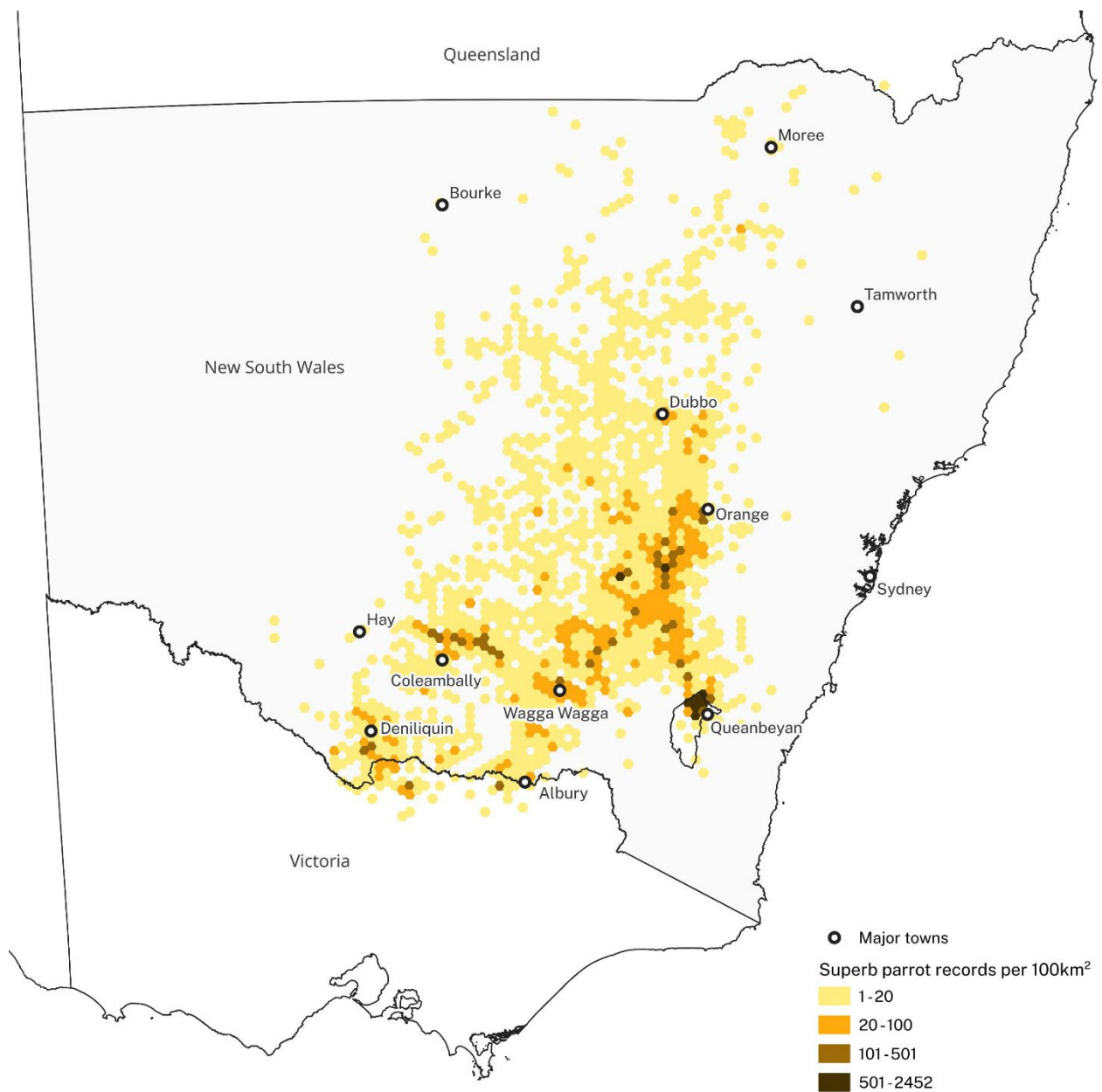


Figure 1 Map showing the distribution of superb parrot records (density of records per 100 km²) across New South Wales

Key threats

Loss of temperate grassy woodlands

Over 90% of the grassy woodland habitat across the geographic range of the superb parrot has been cleared. This is the key reason the superb parrot and many other woodland birds are now threatened with extinction.

Loss of hollow-bearing trees

Large old living and dead standing eucalypt trees with hollows continue to be lost in our rural and regional landscapes. These key habitat features take, on average, 150 years to develop.

Vehicle strike at grain spill sites

Superb parrots and other parrot species enjoy a free feed of spilled grain during summer harvest time on regional roads, with disastrous results.



Saving our Species and the community helping the superb parrot

For decades, the superb parrot has been well known among people in regional New South Wales. It is the town mascot in Boorowa, and several towns in New South Wales and Victoria feature the bird in silo art.

In 2017, the NSW Saving Our Species (SoS) program began providing support, expertise and funding to help protect and restore superb parrot woodland habitat. Through community engagement, the project has connected people interested in the species. Many have become citizen scientists, counting the number of parrots in their local area each year (see Figure 4). This includes local farmers who have protected and planted new habitat for the species on their farms. Thanks to their observations, we now know that small numbers of parrots remain in some areas year-round.

What have we achieved so far?

The success of the Saving Our Superb Parrot project is based on community engagement and networking to increase public awareness and landholder participation to achieve conservation outcomes across over 160 private properties in the Lachlan and Murrumbidgee River catchments.

In partnership with 5 Landcare groups, Greening Australia, South East Local Land Services and Cowra Woodland Bird Group, the project has so far achieved:

Southern Slopes and Southern Tablelands

- Funded habitat restoration on 140 properties
- Planted over 40,000 new trees and shrubs
- Planted 6,000 new paddock trees with cattle-proof guards
- Protected and fenced 60 hollow-bearing paddock trees
- Protected and fenced 400 hectares of remnant box-gum woodland threatened ecological community habitat
- Revegetated over 150 hectares of revegetation from direct seeding or tubestock plantings
- Conducted over 400 transect surveys with the help of citizen scientists, including landholders
- Recorded more than 1000 new records of superb parrots from community member observations

Riverina and South West Slopes

- Habitat restoration actions at 23 properties
- 414 hectares of revegetation of box-gum woodland habitat
- 64,000 tubestock trees and shrubs planted
- 135 km of direct seeding
- 100 mature hollow-bearing trees have been protected
- 11 community engagement activities, including 2 tree planting days, attracting over 160 participants
- 53 baseline surveys at restoration sites



Figure 2 **Examples of SoS-funded superb parrot habitat restoration. D Oliver/DCCEEW**



Figure 3 **Examples of SoS-funded superb parrot habitat restoration. D Oliver/DCCEEW**



Figure 4 **Examples of SoS-funded superb parrot habitat restoration. D Oliver/DCCEEW**



Figure 5 **Examples of SoS-funded superb parrot habitat restoration. D Oliver/DCCEEW**

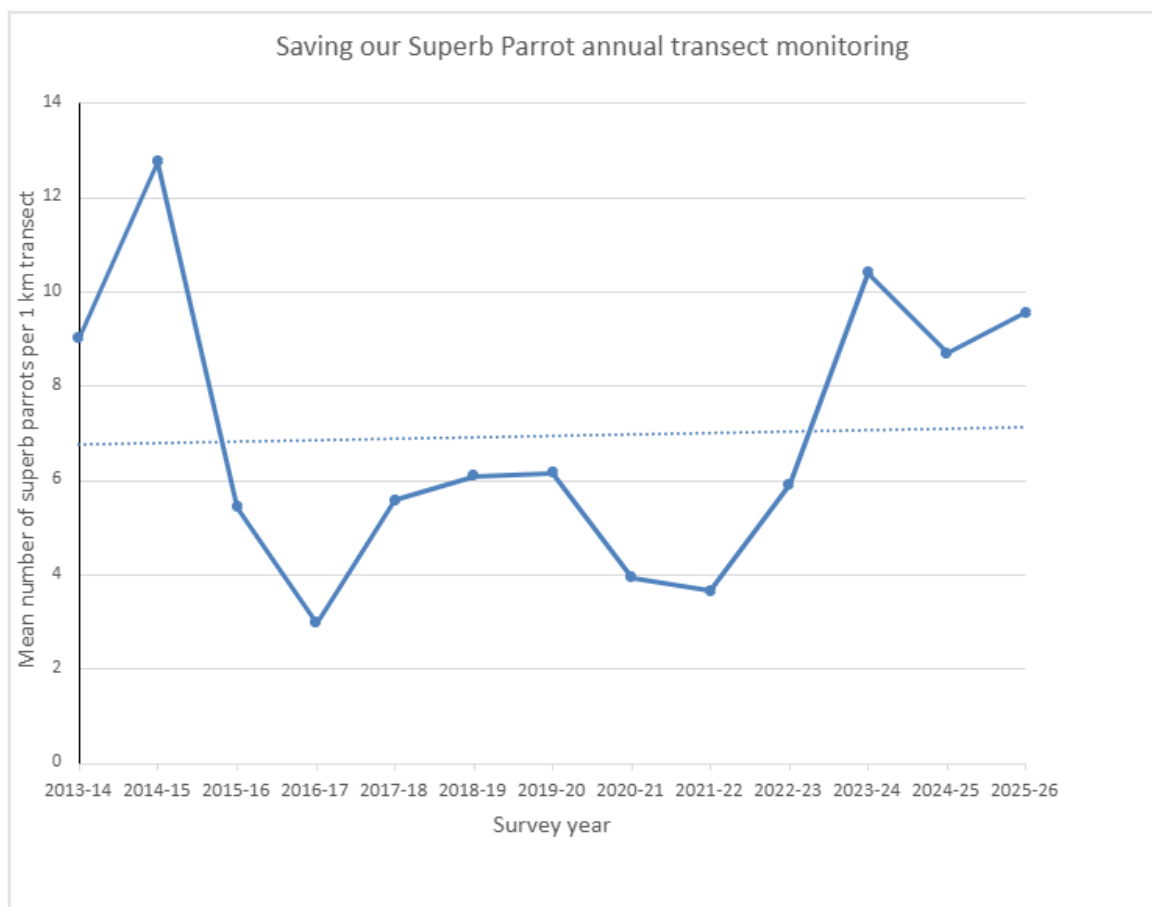


Figure 6 Results of community-driven superb parrot population monitoring 2013–25

Helping the superb parrot

Key conservation actions for the superb parrot

Protect your woodlands

The most important and cost-effective action is to protect remnant woodlands on farms and other land tenures. Mature woodland with hollow-bearing trees is particularly critical.

Enhance your woodlands

Most of the temperate grassy woodlands in inland New South Wales are degraded and fragmented. Increasing the size, condition and connectivity through active restoration (regeneration and revegetation) are important longer-term actions to provide more habitat for superb parrots and many other woodland species.

Protect hollow-bearing trees, dead and alive

Without tree hollows, the superb parrot has nowhere to breed. Large old trees in rural and regional landscapes are irreplaceable, landholders should protect them for the parrots, livestock and their visual aesthetic value.

Plant new woodland habitat and new paddock trees

Superb parrot and many other threatened woodland fauna species need more habitat to survive and recover. The 3 main ways to revegetate cleared areas are:

1. allowing natural regeneration of trees and shrubs by fencing and temporarily destocking
2. 'direct seeding' of larger areas with a mix of appropriate local tree and shrub species
3. planting 'tube stock' trees and shrubs as remnants, wide (>30 m) corridors, 'stepping stones' or scattered (no more than 50 m apart) paddock trees for the future.

Cover your grain loads and report grain spills to your council, Landcare or the EnviroLine

Grain-haulage trucks and farm vehicles carting grain should be covered. Please check for leaks at the tailgates as well.

If you see spilt grain on regional roads, which attracts parrots, including the superb parrot, report it to the local council, local Landcare or EnviroLine (131 555).

Temporary signs can be installed to warn motorists, if reported early enough.

Slow down on regional roads during spring and early summer. Take care where parrots feed on spilled grain. Speeding makes it hard to avoid birds feeding on grain on the road.

Funding to help the superb parrot

A significant boost in funding to the Saving Our Superb Parrot project from the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust will allow the restoration of hundreds of hectares of superb parrot habitat over the next 4 years.

If you want to create a woodland habitat for the superb parrot and other woodland animals, there are opportunities through participating Landcare groups and Greening Australia.

Funds are available for revegetation using 'direct seeding', 'tube stock' plantings and natural regeneration. Talk to your local Landcare group or contact Nicki Taws at Greening Australia: ntaws@greeningaustralia.org.au

Agreements with NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust

To know more about landholder opportunities with NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust, visit the [Compare and apply for a conservation agreement](#) webpage.

