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Birds

'We are going to lose these birds': the quiet fight to save the golden-shouldered parrot

Andrew Stafford
Sun 8 Aug 2021 06:00 AEST

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▲ The numbers of the golden-shouldered parrot in Queensland have dramatically faltered in recent decades. Photograph: Minden Pictures/Alamy

Hello everyone.

We recently hosted journalist Andrew Stafford on Artemis. Andrew visited Artemis about 10 years ago and recalls seeing a flock of about 50 parrots in the middle part of Artemis. Sadly, there are now only about 2 or 3 pairs now living in that same area. Andrew's article - [which appears today in The Guardian](#) - is a wonderful story that simultaneously captures the seriousness of the problem but also the genuine hope that we can turn things around using practical actions.



Practical conservation actions in critical Golden-shouldered Parrot nesting habitat. Photo: Braydon Moloney

July was a very busy month, with the first large areas of parrot habitat receiving treatments that will restore their natural open structure. We removed shrubby overgrowth near conical termite mounds, within which the parrots excavate their nests. With these shrubs now gone, we expect future nesting attempts to be more successful because predators no longer have the cover to sneak up and launch an attack. The photo above shows project member Andrew Lilly removing quinine shrubs from near a nest that was active earlier in 2021. Unfortunately we may have been too late for the owners of this particular nest... we found tail feathers belonging to an adult male Golden-shouldered Parrot right next to the nest entrance. Hopefully he managed to escape an attack with just losing his tail. **This observation underscores the urgency of our work.** We need ongoing support to clear around as many nests as we can within the shortest time possible.

In July we also applied a very specialised herbicide to 2 ha of habitat that should be a completely open grassland, but is now thick with trees and shrubs. This herbicide - called *Graslan* - only kills trees and shrubs. It is applied as a pellet using a backpack blower and requires quite a bit of experience to get the dosage right. We are fortunate to have on the team Geoff Messer, who has 40 years' of experience in herbicide application for vegetation management. We'd

like to thank [FMC](#) and [Corteva](#) for providing us with quantities of herbicides to use while developing the habitat restoration techniques.



Vegetation management expert, Geoff Messer (middle) oversees preparations for delivering the precise amount of herbicide required to control woody thickening in Golden-shouldered Parrot habitat. Also in photo is Andrew Lilly (behind shrub - ironically!) and Steve Murphy (left). Photo: Braydon Moloney

To those who have already donated, thank you! Your contributions are being spent exactly where they are needed - on practical solutions in critical habitats.

To those who have signed up for updates but are yet to donate, we hope that we have demonstrated that we mean business when it comes to saving Golden-shouldered Parrots. But to carry on, we need additional support.

Please consider supporting our practical on-ground program. If you have any questions or would like more information, please drop us a line.

Best wishes,
Artemis Nature Fund

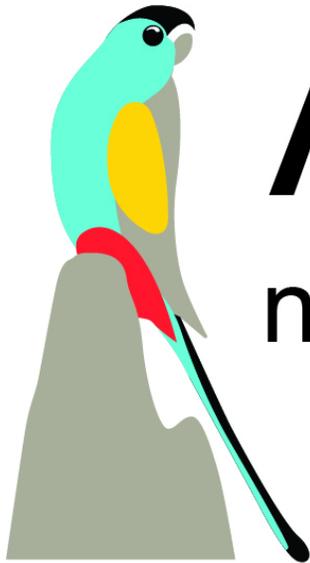
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Adult male Golden-shouldered Parrot on Artemis. We colour banded this bird ("black-black") at a supplementary feed station in December 2020. He and his mate ("red-red") successfully fledged 5 young in April 2021 about 600m away from the feed station. Photo: Pat Webster



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