

# Warning Signs

*"Extinctions are happening today at a greater rate than any time in the past 65 million years."*

Professor Harry Recher,  
Edith Cowan University

It's hard to go shopping without feeling dazzled by the choice of products available. Never have we had so much to choose from, whether or not we can afford it. As our population increases and our demands become more complex, society has placed increasing pressure on the biodiversity that maintains our lifestyle.

## Going, going...

In no more than eight generations since European settlement, Australia has lost 19 out of a total of 282 species of mammals and 20 out of 770 species of birds. Seventy-six plant species have also become extinct.

Some of the casualties are:

- Thylacine (Tasmanian tiger) – last seen 1936.
- Lesser bilby – last seen alive 1931.
- Pig footed bandicoot – last seen early 1900s.
- Broad faced potoroo – last seen about 1875.
- Paradise parrot – last seen 1922.
- Robust white eye.
- *Acacia prismifolia*.
- *Diuris bracteata*.



# of change

## Decline and fall

The Australian biologist Professor Harry Recher has warned that many Australian bird species will probably be extinct within 50 years if rapid habitat loss continues. We have all heard reports of the disappearance of some frog species. Freshwater fish such as Murray cod are also suffering. Off the coast some eastern fisheries have virtually collapsed – all signs that our biodiversity is increasingly suffering from human disturbance.

Things are also turning sour for Australian honeyeaters, whose numbers have been dropping mysteriously for some years. These birds depend on coastal heathlands in winter but move inland to woodlands during the summer. Although coastal heathlands still flourish, the widespread clearing of inland woodlands is now threatening the honeyeater's survival. The warning signs are there that Australia's biodiversity is feeling the strain.

## People making a difference

Students at Woodbridge District High School in Tasmania are helping re-establish habitat for the threatened swift parrot with the help of Greening Australia and Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife. The parrot relies on Tasmanian blue gums which were disappearing from the area. Students are now growing tree seedlings to plant around the school in the hope of establishing future habitat for the parrot.

**Threatened Species Network**  
[www.nccnsw.org.au/member/tsn](http://www.nccnsw.org.au/member/tsn)

