

Media Release

Ingrid Stitt MP

Minister for Early Childhood & Pre-Prep
Minister for Environment



Thursday, 27 April 2023

VICTORIA'S ICONIC HELMETED HONEYEATERS TAKE FLIGHT

The Andrews Labor Government is boosting Victoria's critically endangered Helmeted Honeyeater population, with 20 more birds released into the wild as part of conservation efforts to save the species.

Minister for Environment Ingrid Stitt today visited the Yarra Ranges National Park to participate in the wild release of the birds, which are one of the state's faunal emblems.

Through the Labor Government and conservation partners' support, the Helmeted Honeyeater population has risen to 250 in the wild.

The Government has contributed \$6 million since 2018 to the recovery of the bird species and Leadbeater's Possums via the Faunal Emblems Program – improving the long-term conservation and health of both animals.

The release of captive-bred birds combined with extra feeding in the wild has seen those numbers increase by 200 over the past three decades – one of Victoria's most significant threatened species success stories. But until recently, this population was restricted to just Yellingbo.

The newly released Helmeted Honeyeaters were hatched at Healesville Sanctuary as part of the Government's conservation breeding program which began last year with captive-bred birds from Healesville Sanctuary and wild-sourced birds from Yellingbo taken to establish a new Helmeted Honeyeater population in forest near Warburton.

In the second breeding season near Warburton, strong nesting activity was recorded resulting in 12 wild-born fledglings. Establishing a second population is critical to strengthening genetic diversity in this population and reduces the risk of losing the species entirely through bushfire or disease.

The Labor Government is delivering the program in partnership with Zoos Victoria, Parks Victoria, The Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater Inc., Melbourne Water, Monash University, University of Melbourne, Yarra Ranges Shire Council, Cardinia City Council, Greening Australia, Trust for Nature and generous philanthropic support.

Quote attributable to Minister for Environment Ingrid Stitt

"The Helmeted Honeyeater is unique to Victoria – we're proud to invest in our precious biodiversity and native species so that future generations can observe and enjoy these rare birds."

Quote attributable to Zoos Victoria Senior Ecologist Dr Dan Harley

"This latest wild release marks an important milestone for the Helmeted Honeyeater conservation breeding program. With the help of our partners, we continue to fight the extinction of this critically endangered species, so we can have a future rich in wildlife."