

“Our Superb Parrots”

EARTH FIRST

By Peter West, ECCO



Photo: Tony Smith

You might have noticed a flash of green in the skies around Orange recently. If you think you may have seen Superb Parrots (pictured above), then you are probably correct. Orange – the colour city, hosts a wide range of colourful native parrots, including the threatened Superb Parrot (Latin name - *Polytelis swainsonii*). Over the past month, Superb Parrots have been seen in many parts of Orange as they migrate southwards.

Distinguished by their vibrant green and yellow colouration, very long tail and distinctive call, Superb Parrots are aptly named. This species also has special significance for it is currently threatened under both State and National legislation.

Superb Parrots generally fly from the Riverina district to northern NSW along the Namoi and Macquarie rivers for winter. In early-late spring, they begin their return journey and travel south to breed. At this time, they move through Orange and are most commonly seen in small groups, flying fast between remnant woodland areas and foraging in open grasslands.

During spring, breeding pairs also seek out nesting hollows in large Eucalypt trees, and in recent weeks, evidence of breeding has been noted by many bird watchers around Orange. In early summer, juveniles can also be seen (and heard) feeding with adults in Eucalypts and Acacia's.

We are extremely fortunate that Superb Parrots fly through (and breed in) the Orange, as their native habitat (box-gum woodlands) has been significantly depleted in our district. They also rely on River Red Gum forests, native cypress and mallee habitats.

Further loss of remnant vegetation and box-gum woodlands in and around Orange could result in their being fewer Superb Parrots (and many other species) in coming years.

Protecting nesting sites and feeding habitat for these magnificent birds is critical for their survival.

Help protect Superb Parrots by

- Protecting trees with hollows and remnant vegetation
- Demanding firewood without hollows from sustainable sources
- Installing nest boxes in trees away from predators and disturbance
- Planting native species on your property
- Assisting in revegetation and tree planting activities around town
- Contacting National Parks and Orange City Council if you suspect they are breeding on your property.

Keep an eye open for these magnificent birds in coming weeks before they migrate further south.

For more information, visit www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au or the 'Birds in Backyards' website (<http://www.birdsinbackyards.net>)