

Superb parrot threats

By JOHN McGRATH, Yass NSW

CANBERRA'S superb parrots are victims of the ACT Government's hypocrisy towards the bird's long-term sustainability in the ACT.

For several reasons, not necessarily in order of priority, the ACT Government's attitude to the continued long-term natural survival of this venerable species the in and around the ACT is a disgrace.

The two-pronged attitude by the ACT Government to this vulnerable species whose natural life cycle we do not fully understand beggar's belief.

The ACT Government has been determined annihilate mature old eucalypt trees across what was once a very important breeding area for the superb parrot.

The greater Gungahlin region during the past 20 years has seen former nesting sites for this vulnerable parrot clearfelled, with all mature trees in new suburbs gone.

Look at the approach by Canberra's independent Government's approach to developing the Gungahlin suburb of Forde, advertising the then northern end of Gundaroo Drive to prospective residents with a large billboard saying *Come Live With The Residents* on which was a picture of a pair of superb fairy wrens.

Often early each morning driving to work, very likely waiting to do a right hand turn for a traffic light change, heading for a construction site in Fairbairn around 2007-2008 I viewed that sign with interest only to see all mature eucalypts clearfelled by bulldozers in a very swift operation leaving no suitable habitat no birds?

An ACT-based aviculturist and his late father who took an interest in superb parrots saw a breeding pair of the birds return to nest after their northern break to sit on the gutter of a new two-storey Gungahlin home saying to each other: "I know there was a tree we raised our brood in here last year."

The Gungahlin area, along with the Canberra suburb of Belconnen, were once both very important breeding habitats of the superb parrot — a natural geographical breeding range that once stretched unabated from beyond Boorowa in the north through Murrumbidgee, Bungendore and Gundaroo then on through what are now the established suburbs of northern Canberra.

In this region the late Herb Greenwood grew up and related to me stories of feeding superb parrots covering oaten hay ready for threshing for horse feed.

Herb also told me that this same parrot enjoyed the soft, milky seed heads of the oats earlier in the years and as Herb pointed out that extracted milky substance would

have been ideal chick-raising food.

He related that the birds would land atop the standing semi-dried off oats to feed.

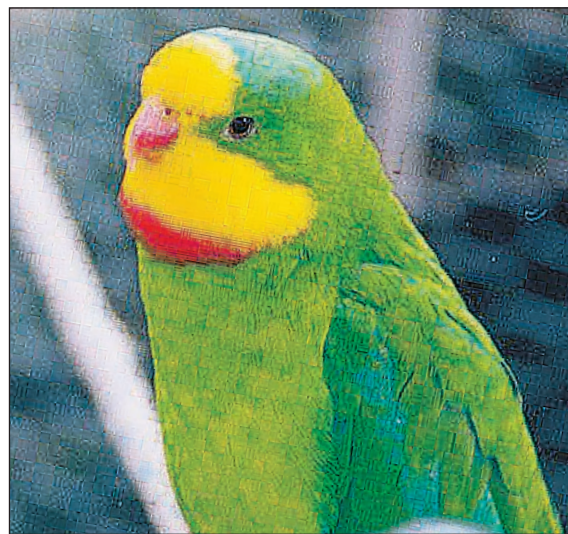
Perhaps now, almost a century later, the bird had to quickly adapt from foraging for native seeds to raise their broods on the new European crops.

I note in the article in the February 2019 edition of *Talking Birds* that, according to ACT Government ecologist Dr Laura Rayner, that woodlands adjacent to the Gungahlin suburb of Throsby have become a breeding refuge for the superb parrot.

Probably the area Dr Rayner refers to is the Goorooyarroo Nature Reserve.

Dr Rayner also said several pairs of the parrots utilise the same tree but use different hollows to breed.

That is an obvious adjustment to overcoming the continual ongoing shortage of suitable natural nesting sites.



The superb parrot is threatened by suburban development in Canberra as well as by turbine blades at wind farms to the north of the ACT.

Dr Rayner also raised the issue of the species nesting further away from suburban boundaries, which obviously came about as the suitability of nesting trees declines in suburban boundaries.

In 2007 I wrote an article in relation to a pair of superb parrots nesting in a yellow box tree in the grounds of a new school building site at Harrison, another Gungahlin suburb close to where Dr Rayner's the breeding woodland of the species.

Due to that pair of superb parrots nesting at the time the construction of Harrison School was delayed until after February that year to allow the chicks of the industrious pair of superb to fledge safely and vacate the area.

The same ACT Government that spruiks the funding from 2015 of research into the superb parrot is

the same government that funds wind farm development in neighbouring NSW, attempting to convince the ACT population that their homes will be supplied by an unachievable 100 per cent energy source in the relatively near future.

Likewise, NSW is also supporting funding of the superb parrot as well as approving environmentally damning, fully foreign owned and fully subsidised wind farms surrounding the ACT's northern borders, with all four approved wind farms right in the breeding range of the superb parrot. Those wind farms are called Conroys Gap, Bango, Rye Park and Coppabella.

The latter three lie right in the breeding habitat of the species.

Bango and Rye Park are situated between Boorowa and Yass, with Coppabella approved west of Bookham, Binalong north of the Hume Highway on the exceptionally steep gradient Coppabella Range.

The Coppabella Range is in the Berremangra area and east of

felling any trees during the construction of the Coppabella wind farm during the breeding season the superb parrot."

When I asked that so-called environmental consultant when the breeding season for this parrot was he was either unable to answer or refused to answer the question.

So much for openness and consultation from a foreign-owned company.

In April 2017 I attended a CCC meeting about the Bango wind farm where another foreign-owned company, CWP Construction Company and asked their environmental consultant what she knew about the superb parrot.

The answer was a stunned silence.

Attempting to dig deeper on her knowledge of the species as I was an invited observer to meeting I was shut down by the chair person.

At the Coppabella wind farm it has been stated that wind turbine will be no closer than 50m to a hollow-bearing tree.

From what I can glean their definition of a hollow-bearing tree is a living tree containing suitable hollows, with no acknowledgement that a dead hollow tree is a protential nesting site for any cavity nester including the superb parrot.

That lack of acknowledgement of a dead hollow tree as a protential nesting/roosting site for any animal is totally flawed.

In late October 2016 I hosted for a few days some Dutch acquaintances on a visit from the Netherlands.

One specific bird that group wished to see in its natural state was the iconic superb parrot and to gain assistance locating the bird at its nesting tree I enlisted the help of Boorowa's expert on the species, Pat Thompson.

We visited Pat's home and aviaries and from there Pat was able to direct me to specific roads and specific trees where he knew the birds nested. Not surprisingly, those trees were dead, previously ringbarked trees.

Pat's knowledge won through as each tree he had directed me to had a cock bird sitting guard over his sitting mate.

I chanced on an ABC TV program where once again a member of the ACT Government — the same body that supports wind farms which typically destroy hundreds of hectares of suitable breeding/ seeding superb parrot habitat that will eventually knock down the parrots with blade tips that can be turning in excess of 300km per hour — is worried that the superb will be impacted by drones delivering parcels within the borders of the ACT.

Surely that is a case of double standards?

Jugiong.

I have known for more than 50 years that that is superb parrot breeding territory. That knowledge came from some of my classmates, people who still reside in the region.

Due to my lifelong interest in nature and in particular birds my 1960s classmates informed me of the fact that they knew that superb parrots nested on their family properties.

I am a member of the Coppabella Community Consultation Committee and at our latest meeting in February this year I asked Goldwind, the Chinese company constructing the industrial estate, via their environmental consultant what they knew about the superb parrot.

Attempting to tell me that he had a lot of knowledge of the species he said: "We will not be

The Superb Parrot (*Polytelis swainsonii*) by John McGrath

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My main reason for writing this information on the Superb Parrot is that this Parrot of concern has “ground to a halt” at least temporarily the construction of one of the Australian Capital Territories new Super schools!

Later on I will go into a bit of my personal experience with this bird and some local area natural history!

Superb Parrot Stops School Construction

The discovery that a pair of Superb Parrots had commenced nesting activities in the proposed school grounds of a new school site at Harrison in the Gungahlin area of North Canberra in the ACT delayed the commencement of construction efforts late in 2006.

The nest was discovered in a standing Yellow Box Tree, (*Eucalyptus melliodora*) and once the builder had conferred with Environment ACT it was decided to postpone the start of construction work until late February 2007. It was perceived by delaying the start date of construction that any chicks raised by this pair would be given time to vacate the immediate area and thus building activities would not interfere with these birds.

It was decided by agreement with Environment ACT and the Construction Company Manteena to fence off the stand trees in which the nest tree stood and to keep any preliminary builders activities to the other side of the construction area.

For anyone not familiar with the Gungahlin ACT area it appears to me that this region was once forest country that would have been dominated by Yellow Box Trees, the Yellow Box are also intermingled with Red Gum (several large examples of each still stand in this area today) but it would appear that the Yellow Box Trees are more important in the ecology of the Superb Parrot for both food, ie these Parrots feed extensively on the blossom and seeds of this species of tree, also the same trees provide shelter during the heat of the day, also “launching pads” for foraging in the local grasslands, and the hollows developed in both dead and living trees are also utilised as nesting sites. Some of the local native grassy woodland has been preserved in the area by Environment ACT, examples are of which are Mulanggari and Goorooyaroo nature parks. There’s a couple of tongue twisters for you!

Also in the not to distance past this area would have been farm land possibly sown to oats, the late Herb Greenwood from Yass, who was raised in the Gundaroo area slightly north of the Gungahlin area itself told me of vivid memories of paddocked stooked oaten hay, in full seed head drying before thrashing to collect the seed for horse feed, he told me of these stooks being covered in mainly Superb parrot cocks devouring the mainly “milky” oat seed. The cock Superbs would have had either chicks or a sitting hen, or alternately a combination of both in a nest not to far away.

Herb also recollected that prior to the use of the scythe to cut the oats that the oats crops would again be covered in these parrots again feasting on the milky seed heads.(This is a very good example why we should feed our captive birds on a similar diet in the breeding season especially)

The Murrumbateman/Gundaroo areas where Herb saw these parrots on the oats crops are still important nesting sites for this parrot species today, as it appears is the Gungahlin area itself!

Delaying the Construction starting date to February would have given the

chicks long enough to vacate the area. From my experience with breeding these birds, the chicks fledged very early January remained dependant on their parents for some weeks but got on the wing soon after leaving the nest, thus in a natural situation they would have got away from the nest area fairly quickly.

Some notes from my aviary experiences.

I bred from a pair of these birds from 1979 until the early 1990s. The “cock” bird fed his mate the first year in their “cockie” holding cage outside our kitchen window as an uncoloured bird. I successfully bred them in a plywood box about a metre deep, about 200mm square hung at an angle on the Northern side of an East facing flight, the box had an inspection door toward the bottom, that was as simple as a square of the same wooden material pivoted at the top of the “Diamond” with a screw and coming to rest at the bottom on a nail, it was a simple action of rotating the door for nest inspection. Toward the top of the box on the same outward facing side was a hole about 75mm diameter with a “block” of wood screwed underneath for a landing pad. In that box that pair raised yearly successive clutches of between one and five chicks per year, over the period I mentioned above!

As I stated above these little “blokes” fledged as strong fliers so minimum disturbance around the flight at fledging time and some additional protection to stop the chicks “self destructing” is needed ie leafy Eucalypt branches at either end of the flights is a must!

My aviary was Approximately 5.6 metres long, 2.1 metres high and 900mm wide. That converts to 18' X 7' x3' for the Older Hands!

It was whilst attending a bird sale with some of these chicks I was shown by an old hand that used to collect Superb Parrot chicks from the wild in years gone by how to sex “uncoloured” birds! He had heard me tell when asked by a perspective purchaser “How do you sex them?” my answer was “I dunno!”, this gentleman said bring them out in the Sun and I will show you. So out we went and I was shown that once you got sunlight on the immature birds that the “underlying” yellow mask and red throat band of the young cocks could be seen, the face of the young hens was awash with a bluish grey colour!

Due to the fact that because my aviaries faced East when the “hatch” on the nest box was opened allowing direct morning sunlight to flood onto the chicks and from almost the time the babies started to feather, out of their “woolly” dark grey lorikeet like down I was able to sex them with accuracy. I became fairly skilled at this process over the years. I believe because the hormone levels are up in the chicks during this early stage of their lives, the “sexual facial” colour was intensified!

Probably if you are not sure of this method to have them sexed by the more conventional methods of DNA or Surgical! I closed rung all my chicks, for tracking purposes and their progeny ended up distributed across much of Southern and Eastern Australia from places like Atherton in far North Queensland down to Hobart in Tasmania across to Adelaide in South Australia also some where sent to Melbourne in Victoria.

Twenty to twenty-five years ago I fed my parrots on a parrot mix that in retrospect contained too much grey sunflower and oats, I used to feed garden weeds the likes of milk thistle etc at breeding time. Nowadays if I kept this species, I would be more likely to feed a basic mix of Budgie or Canary seed, boosting this with soaked/sprouted mix and additional green food as the

breeding season approached. My cockatoos are maintained on a similar diet today and seem to prosper!

Few other Notes on the Superb

Locally the Superb Parrot is also known by the name Green Leek, which was the name I grew up with, and the name Herb Greenwood referred to this parrot as, and it is also called the Barraband Parrot (apparently from the aboriginal name).

When I was a kid it seemed to me that a lot of homes in the Yass area had a Green Leek cock as a pet, usually housed, in some sort of cage under a tank stand, and these birds were invariably kept as single "pets" as they were very proficient whistlers and said a few words as well! Local shopkeepers seemed to have a few pet Superbs down the back as well back then! (Obviously obtainable) [My late Father was an old school mate of some of these shop keepers and we would get the invite to inspect the birds]

As an exhibitor and later a judge at regional bird shows, to see 15 to 20 cock Superbs in a class was also testament to this availability!

It was this "obtainability" that has caused some of the demise of the local population of this parrot, combine that along with "blatant land clearance" for cropping and grazing purposes!

You see the old hands knew that the Green Leek chicks like the Sulphur Crested Cockatoos (*Cacatua galerita*) were ready for "the taking" as both species flew at or close after Christmas time, so that was the time you collected these birds.

Unfortunately, in the case of the Superb it invariably nested just above ground level, you see a lot of pairs entered the nest in an upper limb of hole in a tree and climbed down the "pipe" in the centre of the tree to lay their eggs and raise their brood close to the ground level in the main trunk. The "astute bushman" armed with this knowledge and being a little thirsty during the coming festive season would arrive at a selected tree armed with a sharp axe, give the "butt" of the tree a "bash" with the back of the axe, the resultant distinctive "startled" cry of the Superb Parrot chicks would give away their location and soon a hole was cut, and the chicks turned into the Christmas beer!

This action resulted in that nest site being "null and void" into the future, ie the nest site was destroyed. I know of several examples of trees with axe holes that have destroyed such nesting sites, that are still standing!

To see this parrot fly in the wild state is a sight to behold, especially when viewed from above, if you happen to be travelling through its area and a flock is disturbed whilst feeding on spilt grain by the side of the road, and you are in a position to look down on their backs the green of the mature cocks is iridescent in the sunlight ! There are not many captive situations where this iridescence can be appreciated!

This "new found habit" of this parrot feeding on split grain results in the unfortunate deaths of this bird from collisions with motor vehicles!

The grain is usually wheat spilt from grain trucks in this region, but they also feed along train lines [again the silver bullet comes off best in a collision situation as well] These parrots can also be seen feeding around grain silos.

I have become familiar with the voice of these birds over the years and at a quick glance if you are in an area that the Quarrion *Nymphicus hollandicus* inhabits as can happen in this area in drought years, it is very easy to confuse

the “flight silhouette” of these two species. Voice of either species being the quickest way to distinguish between them in flight at a distance!

I hope you enjoy reading about some of my observations and knowledge of this parrot, the Superb is still required by law in NSW to be registered, although I no longer keep this bird, I hold a strong interest in its future!

Dialogue; Stooked Hay- a little before my time, (I know most of you think that I am an old “bastard” but I listen to the information passed onto me by my predecessors) the growing oats was “cut”, using a hand operated scythe, and gathered and bound with twine in a cylindrical configuration to dry, or semi dry before being :thrashed” in a thrashing machine to collect the grain, alternately the resultant stooks where fed through the chaff cutter. (The “chaff cutter” would desiccate the stalk and grain, into about 5 to 6mm sized portions, with its fast spinning vertical mounted blades, I have heard of various mishaps with portions of hands etc being fed through the chaff cutter)

Both grain and chaff where fed to the working horses of the era! A note in days gone by, there where mobile contractors that used to operate steam driven thrashing machines that would turn up to your property to do this job for you.

The scythe was a curved steel bladed device with a wooded handle with another smaller wooded handle at right angles that was swung in an arc and felled the vegetation ahead of it, and yes I have used one of these!

Further Reading;

The series of Publications Written by Joseph M. Foreshaw on Australian Parrots and Parrots of the World. Dating back to 1969

The Readers Digest book Complete Book of Australian Birds

The Australian Bird Keepers A Guide to Australian Long & Broad-tailed Parrots & New Zealand Kararikikis

Australian Coral-Billed Parrots from Singil Press

Superb Parrot Under Attack from Wind Farm Development

By John McGrath

My purpose for writing this article is to highlight to the readers of Australian Aviary Life the plight of one unique Australian Parrot that will be impacted and its survival threatened by the intended erection of a massive field of a so called Wind Farms. That is due to Government policy of today industrialising normally tranquil farming and grazing areas by proposing to erect in this case three separate installation which will cover an area stretching from just East of Boorowa in New South Wales running approximately 60 kilometres to the South abutting to the North side of the Hume Highway toward Gunning right across to the West at Yass. These Wind Farm installations [are the Rugby Wind Farm in the North](#), the Rye Park running down the Eastern side to the Jerrawa area, with the Bango [Wind Farm](#) taking up the West side of the three, it will border the Lachlan Valley Way on its Western perimeter right to its junction with the Hume Highway just West of Yass.

350 Wind Towers are the proposed total to be erected over these three areas.

These structures stand [160](#) meters tall, carry a tercel (oil immersed generator) the size of a Toyota Land Cruiser and each of their three blades are [more like 60](#) meters long.

Eventually this particular installation [could](#) cover 1000 square kilometres [if it proceeds](#).

One of the Australian Parrots that will be impacted if this installation goes ahead is the Superb Parrot *Polytelis swainsonii*, some readers of Australian Aviary Life may know this parrot as the Barraband, this bird will be impacted directly by this development as the exact location of these three Wind Farms combined are the prime and final nesting area for this bird, there is no option for it to relocate, possibly for the millennium it has been returning to this area like clockwork to reproduce each Spring and into the early Summer.

It is not only an Iconic Australian bird but is also listed as Vulnerable (2004 IUCN Red List Category) also being a unique member of two groups of Australian Parrots both have three members, the first group of three are an endemic Australian group of parrots that belong to a group known as *Polytelis*.

Its two colleagues are the Princess Parrot *Polytelis alexandrae* and the two subspecies of the Regent Parrot *Polytelis anthopeplus*

It is also a member of another group of three definitive Australian Parrots that are migratory in this case its cohorts are the Swift Parrot *Lathamus discolor* and the Orange Bellied Parrot *Neophema chrysogaster*. All three parrots

have a defined breeding and post breeding range where they migrate to after their broods have fledged.

Like wise all three in this group will and are being impacted on by the Wind Farming industry.

The construction of this conglomeration of Wind Farms will impact on the Superb Parrot in several ways as well as immediate habitat destruction during construction, that is there will be trees destroyed that are now either or both nesting sites or feeding sites for this bird.

During construction of these devices a large area is to be cleared to build the footing for these towers, plus allow an area for a pad mounted transformer at the base of each tower, not forgetting the need to deal with the resultant "overburden" (the soil removed to allow the footing to be poured) then there is easement clearances for the transmission lines whether they be under ground or overhead, also there are six metre wide access roads are to be constructed. Please don't forget the potential for erosion caused by soil disturbance as some of these structures are to be installed in pretty steep terrain. Then on top of that the developers need to build an Electrical Substation that will cover an area 100 metres by 100 metres, to step up, and control the generated power from these Wind Towers, which in some cases will tap into an adjacent existing Trans Grid power line that already is rated at 132,000 volts.

If these installations are allowed to progress and are constructed all bird life will be affected by blade strikes, Brett Lane & Associates (BL&A) (Company employed by Suzlon the Wind Farm developers to prepare an EIS) admit that during their observation that 10% of the sighted Superb Parrots flew directly through the Rotor Swing Area (RSA), I worry that with an already struggling species as the Superb is that at a very worst case scenario of a 10% attrition rate in this area will effectively null and void the whole breeding population of the Superb Parrot in ten years, that is 10% per year for 10 years in fact the scenario is actually really worse than that, if these towers are constructed in the pathway of a cock bird feeding its mate as she sits and incubates her eggs in the early part of the breeding season and he is struck down, then she will either sit until too weak to survive from lack of food, or she eventually aborts the nest full of eggs which means that years chicks are stopped in their tracks before hatching.

Same scenario of inbound cock Superb struck down a little later in the year and the chicks have already hatched and still being brooded by the hen, simply put the whole nest of chicks are wasted!

Worse still and even later in that breeding season and both parents are inbound crops full for a much older brood and both cock and hen are killed as

one, two parents gone as well as a nest full of chicks, at easy reckoning the attrition rate for this parrot now already exceeds the rate of reproduction so with the added hazard of another item to collide with the species is pushed further into decline.

BLA on pages 71 and 72 of their EIS suggest that these wild birds can be retrained to fly around obstacles like Wind Towers the news is that any parrot that is feeding a sitting mate or a brood of chicks has nothing further from its mind than to accidentally collide with anything, it is totally focussed on feeding that mate/chicks and reproducing its own species. Information to hand is that the rotor blade tips are reputed to be moving at speeds of several hundred kilometres per hour.

Another portion of the EIS prepared by BL&A that I query is that they did fixed time bird observations at 8am in the morning and at 19-30 in the evenings, these were 15 minute observation periods. As most of us know during the Summer when our birds breed 8am is up to 2,5 to 3 hours after daylight EDST, and birds are well and truly on the move after food for their broods before that time, and that similarly that at 7-30pm EDST is still physically afternoon to the birds and they will be still out foraging for possibly another 1.5 hours

Another feature of wind towers are that they do and will catch on fire for a variety of reasons, and with the tercel as described above aflame and full of oil mounted 160 meters above ground level, its near impossible to extinguish. Even "Elvis" the Fire Suppressing helicopter will be hard pressed to deal with this situation. If these devices catch on fire as they have done in the past both in Australia and overseas (refer to various websites for further information) the habitat of the Superb Parrot will be further impacted with both nesting and food source destruction, don't think it won't happen, on a day like the day that Canberra burnt back in January 2003, one of these machines ignite and the resultant fire would be unstoppable!

Superb Parrot description.

The accompanying photos (taken of wild birds by Pat Thompson) will give you the reader a very good idea what this parrot looks like, like all the *Polytelis* group it is a long elegant slender parrot with a long tapering tail, the Superb Parrot is approximately 400 millimetres long, have a wingspan of 530 to 570 millimetres and these parrots weigh approximately 130 to 160 grams.

The mature cock bird is readily recognisable being iridescent green in general colour sports a bright yellow forehead crown, an extensive yellow

throat which runs down onto a red throat band, the males exhibit a pinkish wash through the under side of their tail feathers, the bill is coral pink.

The females are generally a similar and slightly duller colour with a bluish flush to their throat feathers and they have red feathering of the thighs, commonly referred to as socks, they also exhibit the pinkish wash under their tails. She also has a coral pink bill. Both sexes have grey feet.

Young birds resemble the female, and on close observation in strong sunlight immature males can be chosen as they exhibit a faint red throat band and yellow under wash to the throat and forehead. They fully colour in twelve months and can arrive back in the Boorowa district in partial colour on their first return.

These parrots have a pleasant warbling voice as well as a repeated currack-currack call. The latter is mainly used as a contact call whilst in flight.

Notes on an Interview with Pat Thompson of Boorowa New South Wales

Pat is an unofficial authority on this species of parrot having made the study of this bird his life long ambition, his mission in life is to educate as many people about this highly endangered species before it disappears from its natural haunts for eternity.

He even opens his aviaries to the general public as part of his Superb Parrot education regime

The Superb Parrot has a very limited breeding range, this breeding range has suffered much alteration especially within the period since the 1970s, where so many trees suitable for the Superb Parrot to nest in have been removed as a direct result of the rise in price of wheat and more rural landholders have removed these large standing trees to open up their paddocks to grow ever increasing acreages of wheat.

Firewood collection has also removed excess trees, and Pat can quote tree line roadside verges as well as paddocks full of standing trees that he knew of only a few decades ago as reliable Superb Parrot nesting sites now standing completely devoid of any trees what so ever.

Pat also estimates from his own observations that the population of Superb Parrots that return now to the Boorowa district to breed is 20% of the same flock that arrived in the district during the years four decades ago. Like a lot of similar cases of birds in decline are we witnessing an aging population that is succumbing to natural attrition whilst away in there in their non breeding haunts. Superb Parrots have been recorded to survive between 20 and 30 years in captivity and if those age figures are replicated in their natural world then we are watching a species in severe decline. Basically the same old birds coming back year in year out until they drop!

From Pat Thompson's observations the Superbs arrive back in the Boorowa district with a weather front that comes down from the North-West, where the isobars are elongated into the South-East corner of NSW and they arrive early to mid September, Pat states from his observations that the birds are all back by the Spring Equinox about the 22nd September.

It is at this time of year in the Boorowa Shire that the Yellow Box *Eucalyptus melliodora* is in full flower and the incoming flocks of Superb Parrots gorge themselves on the pollen/protein rich flowers to build themselves up for the ensuing breeding season. Pat informs me that the birds appear to consume the flowers of this Eucalypt first then "chop" the leaf of the tree off and obtain something from the region where the leaf joins the branchlet.

Pat has also observed that when the parrots arrive "home" to commence breeding that they are very hungry, he vividly remembers being on a property in the Boorowa District when the first flocks came in one September and the property owner was feeding oaten grain to his cattle in a feed ration mix. He related to me that the "faces" of every bird was black as they sourced a quick energy "pick me" up feed from the dung of the fed cattle. Unlike feeding grain to sheep where the individual grains are completely broken down in the sheep's digestive system the whole grain will pass straight through the intestines of a bovine. Thus many grain eating birds partake of a soft easy meal, which obviously the very hungry Superb Parrots that Pat saw that day were also very partial to.

I have personally observed cock Superbs feeding on semi ripe seed of Wattle Acacia species, particularly late Spring as this food source is known to be high in protein and calcium there is no question that these birds are collecting that soft seed for their chicks.

This feeding on soft or semi ripe grain is indicative of the Superb Parrots normal feeding habits, in information again from Pat Thompson he was informed by the "old hands" that Superb Parrots fed extensively on what is commonly known as Corkscrew Grass or Storks Bill *Erodium cicutarium*. The area that Pat's informants spoke of was exactly the area proposed for establishing the Rugby Wind Farm. Those open paddocks contradictory to the BLA report that little Box Gum Grassy Woodlands existed, will actually support important remnant native grasses, such as Danthonia (Wallaby Grass) which as Spring progresses will also provide similar soft seeds for these birds to feed their chicks.

It is often claimed by Wind Farm developers that turbulence and noise produced from turbines will have no effect on wildlife, then why is it that miniature versions of the "big" towers are installed by orchardists/viticulturalists to disturb bird feeding patterns to protect their crops?

It also interests me that with the new medical findings that are surfacing with the health effects of Infrasound (Low level sound) on humans that live within the vicinity of "Wind Farms", as well as the effects this same emission is having on domestic stock both within Australia and in overseas countries, where both cows and ewes that have given birth to their respective offspring close to "Wind Farms", have simply walked off and abandoned their newborn. In Portugal there is evidence due to Infrasound that horses have developed abnormalities in hoof growth as a result of being in paddocks adjacent these installations. Therefore in my opinion the above fields will be null and void to the both the feeding and breeding flocks of Superb Parrots as a result of this disturbance factor

It is whilst roadside feeding on not only *Erodium cicutarium* that Superbs are unfortunately killed by traffic, but these parrots also feed on spilt grain like wheat which once allowed to lay along the road verges absorbs moisture and is also a delicacy for them. Collisions with fast moving country traffic takes its toll on the Superb Parrot population, an idiosyncrasie with many Australian Parrots is that when one of the flock is struck down dead or injured the remainder of the flock come to its aid, which then exasperates the situation with more flock individuals then being struck down, my question here is what will be the outcome if one individual of a flock is struck by a Wind Tower Rotor will their distress calls cause the whole of its flock to swing back into the RSA and in turn many more will be killed.

The Superb Parrot breeding cycle

After the Superbs arrive back in the Boorowa district, and build themselves up in a feeding frenzy they commence the breeding cycle, when egg laying starts, approximately a month after arrival and thus with a 21 day incubation period, the chicks commence to hatch from mid November with a chick hatching very other day in line with egg laying, from then it takes five weeks for the chicks to fledge so by approximately the 20th of December each year all the chicks are on the wing, always very close to the Summer Equinox then according to Pat the next three weeks the chicks are put through an intensive flight exercise regime building them up prior to their long flight to the North North-West, Pat also informs me that this flight training continues and then all the birds depart mid January. Pat has also stated that he has been witness to a whole flock feeding in an oat paddock pick up as one, "sweep" the paddock in circular flying formation and start that journey North at this time of year!

Prior to the flocks departure the whole flock appear to gorge them selves on lerp insects, obviously as a protein additive for muscle development in preparation for their upcoming flight.

I would like to thank Pat Thompson for his information and assistance, Mark Kelly for instigating me to commence writing this as well as Charlie Arnott's and also to members of the Boorowa District Landscape Guardians for their valued assistance

Book References

Australian Coral Billed Parrots by Stan Sindel & James Gill

Australian Parrots Second Edition by Joseph M. Forshaw

Superb Parrot

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I wish to submit an objection against Mod 1 SSD 6693 and future construction by TILT Renewables of Rye Park wind farm for the following reason:

I object to the proposed Mod 1 SSD6693 of the Rye Park Wind Farm for if no other reason than to halt the already accelerating demise of the Superb Parrot *Polytelis swainsonii* a bird that has been readily accepted as an emblem by the former Boorowa Shire Council.

This species is listed as vulnerable, the Boorowa district is worldwide recognised for the place where this species returns each year to breed. Its very existence draws people from around both the country and the world to the Boorowa District each Spring to see it in the flesh.

I for one have hosted people from interstate including Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia to have me take them to Boorowa to see this species in its natural habitat; likewise I have been honoured to have hosted international guests from The Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, The Czech Republic and Britain to come here to see this species in the Boorowa district.

Listed as Vulnerable

Listing and Conservation Advices [Approved Conservation Advice for Polytelis swainsonii \(superb parrot\)](#)
(Threatened Species Scientific Committee, 2016ch) [Conservation Advice].

Page 49 points out rightly that the Superb Parrot *Polytelis swainsonii* is in fact migratory as stated in on the **NGH Environmental's Biodiversity Assessment Addendum Rye Park Wind Farm** March 2016 but returns to the Boorowa area each September to commence breeding activities therefore it relies on Hollow Bearing Trees (HBT), the very HBT that are in line to be clear felled to the point of plus 300 hectares in area and over 1000 in number as confessed by these very documents.

Whether NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) are aware of it or not but the very flowers of existing large eucalypt trees to be removed in the land clearance such as the Yellow Box *Eucalyptus melliodora* are a source of quick sustenance after the Superb Parrots arrive exhausted after long high flights from their Northern haunts in September each year has not been taken into account here.

This energy source is also taken as a build up for the birds as they are very soon nesting after arrival.

The Superb Parrot has a very direct flight path and travels at various levels, therefore the proposed Rotor Swing Area (RSA) increase to tip height of 200 meters will have a devastating effect on this species.

The Superb Parrot flies at various heights Above Ground Level (AGL) through and over open forests and at heights over 100 meters, very rarely does this species fly at levels below 30 meters unless across open fields as they come into land when foraging on grass seed.

The proposed 100-meter setback for towers from HBT or existing foraging and or nesting sites will be of little use in reducing collisions of this parrot with the fast spinning blades, highly likely in excess of 300 kph at tip.

I ask then if anyone from our society were to take, kill or interfere with the Superb Parrot there would be a very severe penalty imposed, yet a foreign own Wind Farm operator such as TILT Renewables can destroy unknown numbers of this species each year and not suffer the same consequences?

Where is the ecological justice in that?

Maybe the OEH should refer to their very own documentation, on this species as per the work done in 2002 in the Boorowa Shire-Vegetation of the Boorowa Shire.

Extract below;

844.5.2 Superb Parrot (*Polytelis swainsonii*)

Boorowa Shire is well known for the occurrence of a breeding population of the Superb Parrot, present during the spring and summer months of the year. The species has been adopted by the Shire as a symbol of the region. It is a predominantly green, medium sized parrot, the males of which have bright yellow cheeks and throat, bordered on the top of the breast by a crescent-shaped band of red. Females are largely green, lacking the bright colours of the male.

Conservation Status

Notwithstanding the species' public profile and appropriate management by many landholders, its habitat continues to be destroyed through insidious and culturally entrenched land use practices.

In Boorowa Shire it has become threatened through clearing of native vegetation and is further threatened as result of the continuing loss of mature or dead trees with hollows. This includes mature trees or stags along roadsides and in paddocks. The rarity of this species is perhaps masked to some extent by its conspicuousness and the fact that it is an easily identified species with a high public profile in the region.

Issues in Boorowa Shire

Removal of nesting trees, including isolated paddock trees and roadside trees, and a reduction in foraging habitats pose the most serious threats to this species in the shire. The fragmented nature of woodland trees and the lack of regeneration are significant long-term issues that need to be addressed.

maintenance or works within road reserves in Boorowa Shire should include an eight part test for this species, except perhaps for some roadsides classed in this report as Low Conservation Value. **The adoption of a tree preservation order would also aid the conservation of this parrot.**

This project will ultimately destroy massive numbers of breeding site and feeding site trees of this venerable parrot species, the Superb Parrot.

I therefore query why the successors the NSW OEH to a report such as this from 14 years previous cannot see alarm bells ring when turning a blind eye to this very same report?

I therefore say if the reader in part wishes to be responsible for the further demise/permanent extinction of such an iconic species then go ahead and approve Mod 1 SSD 6693 for TILT Renewables Rye Park Wind Farm, and stand idly by as this species disappears completely from our landscape and culture!

Australia does not have a credible status as far as extinction of native species is concerned, so in this day and age 2020 should we be aiding and abetting that extensive extinction rate by allowing the further construction of highly subsidised Wind Farms such as an amended Rye Park wind farm?

Regards

John McGrath