

Zoos Victoria's priority species

# HELMETED HONEYEATER

*Lichenostomus melanops cassidix*

*Critically Endangered*



Zoos Victoria is committed to saving the Helmeted Honeyeater. With a highly restricted distribution, this beautiful bird is at risk of extinction due to the loss of its streamside forest habitat. Zoos Victoria's Healesville Sanctuary has led the Helmeted Honeyeater captive-breeding program for more than 20 years.

The release of captive-bred birds has played an important role in boosting the size of the wild Helmeted Honeyeater population. We are also currently working hard with partners to increase the condition and extent of habitat available for the honeyeater and to identify new release localities.

**ZOOS**  
**VICTORIA**  
*Fighting Extinction*



# Zoos Victoria is committed to Fighting Extinction

We are focused on working with partners to secure the survival of our priority species before it is too late.

**Zoos Victoria has been involved in the Helmeted Honeyeater recovery program since 1989. We supplement wild populations through an annual release of captive-bred birds, and provide opportunities for visitors to connect with this iconic bird when they visit Healesville Sanctuary and Melbourne Zoo.**

## KEY PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- Achieve a stable population of at least 500 Helmeted Honeyeaters spread across five localities.
- Improve the condition and extent of habitat available for Helmeted Honeyeaters along forested creeks and rivers.
- Involve the community in Helmeted Honeyeater recovery and raise awareness about the importance of protecting remnant habitat for native species.

## PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Since 1989, Healesville Sanctuary has bred more than 370 Helmeted Honeyeaters, and released more than 250 to the wild.
- The wild population currently contains ~ 200 birds, the largest number since the recovery program commenced. The population has more than tripled since 2013, when it contained just 60 honeyeaters.
- Working with our partners, habitat restoration for the honeyeater is well underway - since 2014 more than one million trees and shrubs have been planted to create habitat.
- Effective genetic management of populations is critical. Every year eggs and/or nestlings are swapped between the wild and captivity to preserve genetic diversity. Gene-pool mixing to restore genetic diversity is also underway.
- Priority release areas have been identified and a new translocation strategy is in development that aims to establish new populations beyond Yellingbo.

## THE SPECIES

One of Victoria's faunal emblems, the Helmeted Honeyeater is at risk of being lost forever. A subspecies of the Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, they feed on eucalypt sap, insects and flower nectar. Once patchily distributed from Healesville to south Gippsland, populations of Helmeted Honeyeater have declined dramatically due to historic clearing of the forests. They are now confined to a single locality and are at risk of extinction.

Helmeted Honeyeaters rely on dense shrubs for nesting and food, and are threatened by vegetation dieback in sections of their habitat and a lack of natural regeneration.

Strong foundations are in place for the future recovery of Helmeted Honeyeater populations. New measures implemented by recovery program since 2013 have been highly successful, reflected in the dramatic increase in the number of honeyeaters in the wild. Expanding the area of suitable habitat and establishing new populations are critical priorities for the recovery team.

This recovery effort is underpinned by strong working partnerships among several government agencies, community groups, and universities. The Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater, a community group involving volunteers, provides extensive support to several of the conservation initiatives underway to recover Helmeted Honeyeater populations.

## THE PLAN

The following critical next steps will enable Zoos Victoria, along with our partners to move forward knowing that we are doing everything we can to prevent the extinction of this species:

Maintaining Zoos Victoria's captive breeding program with a focus on gene-pool mixing.	\$1,400,000
Translocations to support the wild population and establish at least one new population.	\$320,000
Designing and implementing a genetic rescue strategy for the wild population.	\$15,000 p.a
Releasing Helmeted Honeyeaters into Coranderrk Bushland.	\$175,000
Assessing and developing approaches to address fertility concerns.	\$80,000
Supporting monitoring of breeding season.	\$100,000
Database development and maintenance.	\$5,000 p.a
Pre-release predator avoidance training as required.	\$5,000 p.a
<b>Total cost over five years</b>	<b>\$2,200,000</b>

## How can I help?

We are working hard to boost the production of captive-bred honeyeaters available for release and restore habitat, but we still need all the support we can get. You can support our Wildlife Conservation Master Plan 2019-2024 by donating at: [zoo.org.au/donate](https://zoo.org.au/donate)

## PROGRAM PARTNERS

Birdlife Australia  
[birdlife.org.au](https://birdlife.org.au)

Cardinia Shire Council  
[cardinia.vic.gov.au](https://cardinia.vic.gov.au)

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning  
[delwp.vic.gov.au](https://delwp.vic.gov.au)

Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater  
[helmetedhoneyeater.org.au](https://helmetedhoneyeater.org.au)

Greening Australia  
[greeningaustralia.org.au](https://greeningaustralia.org.au)

Melbourne Water  
[melbournewater.com.au](https://melbournewater.com.au)

Monash University  
[monash.edu](https://monash.edu)

Parks Victoria  
[parkweb.vic.gov.au](https://parkweb.vic.gov.au)

Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority  
[ppwcma.vic.gov.au](https://ppwcma.vic.gov.au)

Trust for Nature  
[trustfornature.org.au](https://trustfornature.org.au)

Yarra Ranges Council  
[yarraranges.vic.gov.au](https://yarraranges.vic.gov.au)