



ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

Strong Nature Laws 2023



Issue Brief

We need strong laws to stop extinctions, halt decline of species and repair nature.

Australia is in the grip of an extinction crisis.

Around one sixth of Australia's birds are at risk of extinction. We desperately need to change the way we manage our natural systems to better protect our beloved birds, animals and plants.

We need strong nature laws this year, to ensure our beautiful and irreplaceable birds and landscapes are protected forever.

Key asks for nature law reform:

1. Robust rules to set a new standard for protection and restoration of nature
2. Build the agency that has the grit to implement the rules
3. Every species at risk deserves a plan for its recovery
4. Funding is needed to ensure dedicated capacity to implement nature laws
5. Data-driven decision-making – informed by the best available science and data

It is time to meet with our Federal elected representatives to show why we need law reform and to build their support for strong legislation that protects nature!

For more, visit www.actforbirds.org/stopextinctions or scan the QR:



‘Meeting your Federal members’ checklist

Pre-meeting preparation checklist:

- Send a request for a meeting or to take your representative out for a Bird Walk (template is provided in this toolkit)
- Follow up request/call (if needed)
- Are you meeting as a group with others who are your elected representative's constituents? See if they would like to join (if online try to limit to 5 people)
- Coordinate with your group and assign roles.
 - **Leader** – determine ahead of time who will lead the discussion, including introductions and steering the conversation back to your key ask.
 - **Note Taker** – To capture minutes/actions/commitments. They do not have to be comprehensive but be sure to capture:
 - your elected representative's response to your ask and any concerns they share
 - questions on notice
 - points your elected representative found interesting or engaged with
 - any recommendations your elected representative offers about your ask
 - **Other attendees:** Be sure to allow everyone who joins the opportunity to be a part of the discussion. This can be facilitated by assigning each person with a specific topic or talking point to discuss.
- Research your elected representative.
 - Check their social media, websites and speech history.
 - Their first speech can be found on the Australian Parliament House website

In-Meeting Checklist:

- Discuss the key messages (see the ‘Leave Behind’ brochure in this toolkit)
- Ask your member if it is ok to take a photo with them to share with media/social media.
- Verbally confirm any actions or commitments your representative makes.
- Thank them for their time and offer to meet in the future.

Post-meeting Checklist:

- Debrief with your group and consolidate notes.
- Post your photos on social media, tag your elected representative and thank them for their time.
- Follow up with your elected representative on any actions and commitments.
- Maintain and grow the relationship.

Template email to your elected representative

Dear **Mr/Ms [surname]**

As one of your local constituents, I am writing to ask that your support the reforms of Australia's national nature laws.

Australia is in the grip of an extinction crisis.

Around one sixth of Australia's birds are at risk of disappearing. We desperately need to change the way we manage our natural systems to better protect our beloved birds, animals and plants.

We need strong nature laws this year, to ensure our beautiful and irreplaceable birds and landscapes are protected forever.

Some of our keys asks to achieve the implementation of strong nature laws by the end of this year, include:

1. Robust rules to set a new standard for protection and restoration of nature
2. Build the agency that has the grit to implement the rules
3. Every species at risk deserves a plan for its recovery
4. Funding is needed to ensure dedicated capacity to implement nature laws
5. Data-driven decision-making – informed by the best available science and data

I would like to find a time to take you for a Bird Walk in a nearby location or if you prefer meeting to discuss my passion for Australia's birds and the need for law reform as one of your constituents.

Could you please contact me to arrange a suitable time for a meeting? You can contact me at **[email]** or on **[telephone]**. Thank you in advance for your time.

I look forward to working with you and other stakeholders to achieve beneficial outcomes for our native birds and nature.

Yours sincerely,

[Your Name/organisation/group]

Meeting script and key asks

Group Roles

- **Leader:** Introduces the group/branch, leads the discussion and ensure the group stays on topic and makes the ask.
- **Notetaker/Time watcher:** Captures key points, responses, concerns, commitments, and questions during the meeting. Also keeps an eye on the time to make sure the group addresses all of the key messages and ask.
- **Others:** If others want to be active in the discussion, assign them a discussion point to lead on.

Outline of how a meeting might go:

1. Thank your elected representative or staffer for meeting with us.
2. **Time Check:** “How much time do you have for this meeting?”
3. **Introduce yourselves** (keep the time in mind). The group leader can introduce your group in general and provide a brief overview of your work in the electorate and how many members you represent. The leader can then ask the other group members to briefly introduce themselves including their name, town/suburb, and if appropriate why they are concerned.
4. Ask any **staffer/advisers** to introduce themselves.
5. **Show appreciation** for a position your elected representative has taken or a recent accomplishment.
6. **State our purpose:** “Our purpose for requesting this meeting is to discuss with you the need for strong nature laws to halt the decline in species and to repair nature”
7. **State our ask:** “Our ask is that [Your elected representative’s name] you provide your support for national nature reforms. We have more to say on that later, but first we want to open a dialogue with you.”
8. Transition into the discussion (some points you can raise):

From your research, anticipate what you think your elected representative’s responses might be, so you are prepared to ask questions to draw out more information. Listen for the underlying value statements in their responses, acknowledge that value, and connect on common ground.

9. Repeat our ask (hand them our leave behind brief in this toolkit):
“2023 is the year to achieve strong laws for nature and I want to remain in dialogue with you as the reform process progresses throughout the year.”

Our ask is that you raise your concerns about this issue with your Party’s environment spokesperson, and provide your support for the reforms and post on your social media to raise your concerns about Australia’s environment.

10. **Confirm next steps:** “Would you like a hard copy or electronic version of additional materials? How and when should I follow up?”
11. **Thank** them for their time.

Leave Behind Brochure



Let's put nature on a path of recovery!

Be a champion for stronger laws to stop extinctions.
Halt the decline of species. Repair nature.

It is clear, nature is in crisis.

The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (the EPBC Act), Australia's national environmental legislation is failing nature.

- The EPBC Act has failed to tackle the biggest threats to our birds: climate change, invasive species, and habitat destruction from land clearing, logging and development.
- Birds constitute the largest proportion of threatened species in most areas across Australia.(1)
- A study of EPBC decisions between 2000 and 2017 found an area larger than Tasmania was cleared as a result of inadequate regulation, assessment and enforcement.(2)
- Out of the 7.7 million hectares of cleared habitat, over 93% was not referred to the Federal Government for assessment under the EPBC Act.(3)
- Habitat destruction affected 85% of terrestrial threatened species since the year 2000, 60% of these were birds.

Around one sixth of Australia's birds are at risk of extinction and birds are the barometer of the state of nature.

Photo: Swift Parrot by Wilson Lennard



References:
The fact 'one sixth of birds at risk' is based on a BirdLife Australia and Charles Darwin University analysis, 'The Action Plan for Australian Birds 2020' edited by Stephen Garnett and G Barry Baker; (1) Federal Government's Australia State of the Environment Report 2021; (2) Edited by Stephen Garnett and G Barry Baker, the study, led by researchers from the University of Queensland and three environment organisations from 2019, titled 'Lots of loss with little scrutiny: The erosion of habitat critical for threatened species in Australia'; (3) Environment budget figure is from DCCCEW website minister's media release, Oct 2022; health budget figure is from health.gov.au reporting the 'Budget October 2022-23'; Defence budget figure is from Australian Strategic Policy Institute website reporting budget 2022-23 from their website article from 4/06/22.

Australia's national nature laws are failing to stop the destruction of nature and conserve our bird life.

Since the enactment of the EPBC Act, the relative abundance of threatened birds has decreased by an average of more than 50%. With many species' populations, such as the Swift Parrot, declining so significantly that they are now listed as Critically Endangered – one step away from extinction.

What is needed to achieve strong laws for nature

1. Robust rules to set a new standard

Legally enforceable national environmental standards are like the rules. They set the benchmark for decision to be made against and are the foundation for a consistent national approach to environmental protection and restoration.

2. Build the agency that has the grit to implement the rules

Establishment of an independent statutory Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is vital to undertake compliance and enforcement activities, as well as build public confidence in decision-making.

3. Every species at risk deserves a plan for its recovery

Commitment to conservation planning reforms is needed to recover populations of species on the brink of extinction. It is about coordination and resourcing to eliminate threats and protect values and areas that are critical to their survival.

4. Funding

Generous resource investment is necessary to ensure dedicated capacity to enact the EPBC Act and its reforms. This year's spend on the National Environment Department is \$1.8 billion compared to a whopping \$135.3 billion for Health and \$48.6 billion for Defence.(3)

5. Data-driven decision-making

A consistent national approach so all available data such as bird surveys contributes towards informed decision-making.

Ways you can champion stronger laws

- 1 Raise the issue with your Party's Environment spokesperson and let them know you support genuine reform.
- 2 Publicly commit to supporting legislation to reform and improve Australia's national nature laws.
- 3 Post on your social media raising your concerns about the state of Australia's environment.

Who we are

BirdLife Australia is the national bird conservation charity that's fighting to save birds and the natural life systems on which they depend. Together with scientists, nature and bird lovers, we are urgently working to protect the most threatened species and restore local environments. Save Birds. Save Life.



Contact: actforbirds@birdlife.org.au.

You can download print-ready PDF versions of the Leave Behind from our campaign webpage.

Visit www.actforbirds.org/stopextinctions or scan the QR:



Sharing the campaign

Social media connects journalists, opinion makers, politicians and activists. It's a great way to get your message to the right people to show how big our community is that act for birds!

Mainstream media and political staffers often track social media to see which issues are trending and which are boiling over.

When news breaks, news outlets also often feature eye-witness photos and videos people share on social media.

Letters to the editor

Letters to the editor are a very easy way to get your message into the local paper. It enables you or others to voice an opinion to your local politicians and to educate readers.

Be timely. Capitalise on recent news and events that have been covered in the paper or that have happened locally – write within 24 hours if possible.

Make one clear argument. Your letter or piece should be in favour of or critical of a particular position taken by the paper, described in an article or opinion piece. Be subjective, don't make personal attacks.

Think local. Emphasise the local effects of the problem and/or solution you write about.



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For more, scan the QR:



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