Endangered and threatened Australian wildlife
- about threatened species

No one will ever again see a paradise parrot flash its rainbow colours across the sky or see the Tasmanian tiger slink through the wet Tasmanian forest. They are gone forever – they are now extinct. It is very sad, but it is too late. Extinction is forever.

Tasmanian tiger

Since the settlement of Australia by Europeans in 1788, thirty species of mammals and birds and about 100 species of plants have become extinct. A further 57 species of mammals, birds, reptiles, frogs and fish, many hundreds of species of invertebrates, and 209 plants are considered endangered and could become extinct within ten to twenty years.

It is easy to blame the early settlers for the decline and disappearance of many species. But they were people struggling to survive in this strange new land. Few understood the importance of keeping the balance of nature as they cleared forests, hunted and poisoned the native animals, and introduced new species such as foxes and cats from their home countries.

Today we have a far greater understanding of the plight of our wildlife than did the early pioneers. Yet many of the threats continue despite this knowledge. We have created added threats such as urban and industrial development, pollution, the construction of large dams and the illegal smuggling of wildlife.

Ecologically sustainable development means that the basic and reasonable needs of all humans will be met in such a way that basic ecological processes and biological diversity are maintained. The challenge to all Australians is to ensure that while we meet our own needs we do not jeopardise the survival of our fascinating wildlife.

Life on earth is a complex web of interactions between animals and plants, earth, and atmosphere. Without the contributions of various species planet earth might not be habitable by humankind. Plants and animals help to maintain the chemical balance of the atmosphere. Forests help to regulate water supplies. Plants and animals help to make soil and break down wastes. They provide food, control pests and diseases, and pollinate crops. They provide a constant source of wonder and enjoyment.

Southern corroboree frog

Plants and animals have become extinct before. Dinosaurs are an example. However the process is slow, taking thousands of years and longer, allowing sufficient time for other life forms to adjust to the change. But so many plants and animals becoming extinct or endangered in such a short time is a sign of an unbalanced environment. People are the only animals with the power to determine the fate of all other life forms. With this awesome power comes a moral responsibility to ensure the survival of all species which live with us on planet earth.

Several words are used to describe the population of a species. Extinct - Species not definitely located in the wild during the past 50 years; Endangered – Species in danger of extinction and whose survival is unlikely if the threats continue operation; Vulnerable – species believed likely to move into the "endangered" category in the near future if the threats continue operating.

Regent Honeyeater (Xanthomyza phrygia)

Australia ranked sixth for the number of mammals facing extinction and had the highest number of threatened reptiles and amphibians of any country.

Species at immediate risk include the northern hairy-nosed wombat, the western swamp tortoise, the southern corroboree frog, the regent honeyeater, southern blue fin tuna and four species of sawfish are just some of Australia's species identified in a major new international report as being at risk of extinction.

Australians are now aware of the problems facing our threatened species. We are aware that we should change the way we do things – we should recycle, create less rubbish, use less water and not destroy the bush. With help from you and your friends, and by joining our Society in their mission of conserving Australia's precious wildlife, Australia's threatened species have a greater chance of survival.

Short-necked tortoise