

Zoos Victoria's Fighting Extinction Species

# MALLEE EMU-WREN

*Stipiturus mallee*

*Endangered*



Photo: Nicole Brooker

The Mallee Emu-wren is a new addition to Zoos Victoria's Fighting Extinction species list. Bushfires wiped out the last remnant populations of the Mallee Emu-wren in South Australia, and the species has disappeared from large parts of its former range in Victoria.

Another bushfire could move the species even closer to extinction. Zoos Victoria will work with several partners who together form the Threatened Mallee Bird Advisory Committee to support dedicated recovery efforts to re-establish populations in the wild.

**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.

Photo: Nicole Brooker.



**The Mallee Emu-wren is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of wildfire. The species is currently found in three fragmented populations across Victoria's largest Mallee parks and, following local extinction in South Australia due to bush fires, has been successfully translocated and returned to its former range there. The significant risk posed by fire, coupled with its restriction to a small number of locations has prompted Zoos Victoria to include the Mallee Emu-wren on our Fighting Extinction Species' list. Consequently, we are working with several partners who together form The Threatened Mallee Bird Advisory Committee and support dedicated recovery efforts to re-establish populations. An increase in the number of populations is essential to countering the high risk of extinction. If required, we are prepared to establish an insurance population in captivity.**

## KEY PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- Re-establish the species in suitable habitat within its former range.
- If required, establish a captive insurance population.

## PROGRAM OUTCOMES

This is a newly prioritised Zoos Victoria Fighting Extinction species, we aim to achieve the objectives above and annually report on outcomes through Zoos Victoria communication channels.

## THE SPECIES

The Endangered Mallee Emu-wren (*Stipiturus mallee*), despite having a name that calls to mind Australia's largest bird, is a diminutive songbird, weighing just 4 grams. The male's sky blue face and bib, contrasting with a rufous-orange cap, provides a fleeting flash of colour as these tiny, elusive birds dart between patches of dense Mallee spinifex. Female birds lack the blue face and bib.

Mallee Emu-wrens have a high-pitched, inconspicuous call. They forage for insects in large hummocks of Spinifex grass (*Triodia scariosa*), a plant in which they also build their nests. The female incubates eggs, but both parents feed their young.

The Mallee Emu-wren is a weak flyer, and spends most of its time close to the ground in dense cover. The birds do not traverse large open areas, which limits their ability to disperse and recolonise habitat.

Bushfires wiped out the last remnant populations of the Mallee Emu-wren in South Australia, and the species has disappeared from large parts of its former range in Victoria. Clearing and fragmentation of mallee vegetation was the main cause of its historic decline, but bushfires now pose the greatest threat. Another bushfire could move the species even closer to extinction.

## THE PLAN

The Mallee Emu-wren is a new addition to Zoos Victoria's Fighting Extinction Species' list. To kick start our commitment to this bird in the wild we will:

Support wild-to-wild translocation within the species' former range.	\$280,000
Investigate captive breeding and husbandry, as required.	\$100,000
Welcome this new species into Zoos Victoria's priority list. Establishing the Mallee Emu-wren's presence at our zoos and online as part of our local threatened species commitment.	\$15,000
<b>Total cost over five years</b>	<b>\$395,000</b>

## PROGRAM PARTNERS

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

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

Department of Environment and Energy  
[environment.gov.au](http://environment.gov.au)

Department of Environment and Water  
[environment.sa.gov.au](http://environment.sa.gov.au)

La Trobe University  
[latrobe.edu.au](http://latrobe.edu.au)

Mallee CMA  
[malleecma.vic.gov.au](http://malleecma.vic.gov.au)

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

Office of Environment and Heritage  
[environment.nsw.gov.au](http://environment.nsw.gov.au)

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

Zoos SA  
[zoossa.com.au](http://zoossa.com.au)

## How can I help?

We are only just embarking on this critical conservation intervention to save this species and need all the assistance we can get. You can support our efforts to secure a future for the Mallee Emu-wren by supporting our Wildlife Conservation Master Plan 2019-2024 at: [zoo.org.au/donate](http://zoo.org.au/donate)