

Saving feathered futures



WANT TO SUPPORT WILDLIFE WITHOUT LEAVING HOME? **GEORGIA ANGUS** INTRODUCES US TO FOUR THREATENED BIRDS AND SIMPLE, FEEL-GOOD WAYS TO BOOST HABITAT AND REDUCE RISKS FOR WILDLIFE IN YOUR OWN PATCH.



There are lots of direct and indirect ways we can support endangered species from our own backyards – everyone can find a way to help. So, I thought I'd introduce you to a couple of unique endangered birds and suggest some ways you can help them. Many of these approaches will help other native animals, flora and fungi, too!



The gang-gang cockatoo nests in tree hollows.

GANG-GANG COCKATOO *Callocephalon fimbriatum*

NATIONAL STATUS: Endangered
RANGE: Mountain and lowland forests (NSW, Vic & on Kangaroo Island, SA)

Usually I hear gang-gang cockatoos before I see them. Their very endearing 'creaky door' call drifts through alpine forests, where they search for the seeds of eucalypts, she-oaks and wattles to eat. They nest in tree hollows, so they rely on old-growth forests in the mountains where they can breed in the warmer months. Unfortunately gang-gangs have been heavily impacted by habitat loss in Australia's southeast, particularly the 2019–2020 bushfires. Climate change (and the resulting increase in bushfires) and land clearing pose ongoing threats to these gentle birds.

HOW TO HELP: As home gardeners, you can fight to protect local old-growth trees, along with revegetating cleared land. Building nesting boxes in breeding territories (high-country NSW, SA and VIC) will help gang-gangs recoup their populations while we regrow forests. More broadly, donating to conservation charities, such as Birdlife Australia (birdlife.org.au), will ensure birds like the gang-gang receive support.

GOULDIAN FINCH *Erythrura gouldiae*

NATIONAL STATUS: Endangered
RANGE: Savannah country in northern Australia (QLD, NT & WA)

Ironically, Gouldian finches are easily some of the most spectacular birds in Australia, but they are very difficult to spot in the wild. These finches live in the grasslands of northern Australia, feeding on seeds between visits to local waterholes. Living in mixed flocks part of the year, and in mating pairs over the breeding season, Gouldian finches build grass-lined nests in tree hollows amongst savannah country (for example,

Kakadu or the Kimberley). These birds have suffered habitat losses as a result of grazing, land clearing and bushfires. As they lose numbers, they become vulnerable to air-sac mites, which impact the birds' ability to recoup in more fragmented habitat and with less gene diversity.

HOW TO HELP: If you live in their range, planting diverse grasses (particularly native sorghum and spinifex) and providing permanent freshwater will help Gouldian and other native finches. If living out of range, you can donate to or volunteer for Save the Gouldian Fund (savethegouldian.net) or Birdlife Australia.



The spectacular but elusive Gouldian finch. **Opposite:** Gouldian finches build grass-lined nests in tree hollows.

PHOTOS: ISTOCK