

WESTERN GROUND PARROT

Statement by Minister for Environment

MR R.R. WHITBY (Baldvis — Minister for Environment) [12.43 pm]: It is quite fitting that I should rise today to speak about these issues, given that we have just recalled the service of the former Premier, because these issues relate to the environment, which is an issue that was very close to his heart.

Today I would like to update the house on an exciting development in the recovery program for the critically endangered western ground parrot. In April this year, staff from the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, non-government organisations, and community volunteers successfully translocated five of Australia's rarest birds to a location on the south coast of Western Australia. This was the third year of the first-ever wild-to-wild translocation of the species, which aims to support the establishment of an additional population to help safeguard the species.

The translocation of five more western ground parrots to a remote area east of Albany in April brings the total to 19 birds that have been released during the three-year project. The Acting Speaker (Ms R.S. Stephens) will be very interested in this issue, I am sure. Ongoing monitoring of the birds released in the first two years demonstrated success in achieving translocation criteria, with the birds continuing to persist in their new home. It is estimated that fewer than 150 western ground parrots remain in the wild. Predation from feral cats and foxes and large-scale summer bushfires are the biggest threats to their survival. Feral predator removal and fire management, through prescribed burning and other bushfire mitigation measures, has continued at the birds' new home to ensure they have the best chance of survival. The birds were also fitted with radio and satellite transmitters to assist with monitoring their survival and to understand how they use their new habitat.

A successful partnership between dedicated volunteers, state and federal government agencies, and not-for-profit organisations made the translocation possible. I congratulate all DBCA staff, along with staff from BirdLife Australia and the skilled volunteers who assisted with the translocation, and the ongoing support of the Friends of the Western Ground Parrot, South Coast Natural Resource Management, Bush Heritage Australia and the commonwealth Threatened Species Commissioner.