



MEDIA RELEASE 23.03.2015

Government caught "Pulling a Swiftie":

Systemic Tasmanian Government approval of logging known to damage Swift Parrot habitat

Environment groups have today accused the Tasmanian Government of attempting to "pull a swiftie" over endangered species, by supporting logging of critical Swift Parrot breeding habitat against the advice of their own experts.

A report released today by Environment Tasmania, "Pulling a Swiftie", outlines the findings of a Right To Information (RTI) request. It found that the Forest Practices Authority referred a number of proposed logging coupes to DPIPW E for further advice in the 2013-14 financial year, as recognised guidelines for protection of the Endangered Swift Parrot could not be met.

The expert advice received by DPIPW E was damning on the potential impact of logging of the Swift Parrot's breeding habitat.

It variously stated that it would not support the conservation objectives for the species, was against the principle of ecologically sustainable forest management, would occur within critical sites in critical breeding areas, would occur where there were known nearby nesting sites, and that there was no science that could justify the ongoing logging of the parrot's breeding habitat.

Despite how critical and unambiguous this expert advice was, senior decision-makers within DPIPW E approved the logging anyway.

"The Swift Parrot is an incredible bird" said Dr Phill Pullinger, the report's author. "It migrates annually across Bass Strait, up the eastern sea-board as far as South-East Queensland, which is the longest known migration of any parrot species in the world".

"But the Swift Parrot is clinging to survival: there are only around a thousand breeding pairs left, and the only place the swift parrot breeds is in specific suitable forest habitat in Tasmania."

"What these documents demonstrate is a complete failure of the Tasmanian government to live up to its responsibility to protect this endangered bird. Senior decision-makers within the department had clear expert advice that proceeding with logging wasn't scientifically justifiable, but they proceeded with it anyway."

Environment Tasmania's spokesperson for forests, Andrew Perry, said "This is yet another shocking example of a government that wilfully ignores expert advice, and regards our natural environment with a blatant contempt; that chooses ideology over evidence."

But this failure of governance isn't just a concern for Minister Groom: with a total population as low as 2000, the Swift Parrot is listed as Endangered under the Commonwealth Government's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, which is Minister Hunt's responsibility.

"That's why we are calling on Ministers Groom and Hunt both to launch an inquiry into how this has been able to happen on their respective watches. This needs to be done immediately, and with the greatest of urgency. And until both the state and federal governments can offer confidence their management of threatened species, there needs to be an injunction on the logging of any further Swift Parrot breeding habitat", said Mr Perry.

Dr Eric Woehler, Convenor of BirdLife Tasmania described the documented situation as a, "catastrophic failure to protect an iconic endangered species", adding "that by ignoring the advice that clearly identified significant threats to nesting Swift Parrots, DPIPWE were failing in their obligation to protect the species".

He added "this is yet another example of putting unsustainable forestry practices ahead of protecting endangered species. We saw this with Wielangta and Wedge-tailed Eagles - and the result was changes to legislation in favour of logging, and put further unwelcome pressure on endangered species."

Dr Woehler asked "how many more instances exist where the commercial interests of unsustainable forestry operations have been placed ahead of protecting habitat for endangered species? Clearly, Forestry Tasmania cannot achieve even a glimmer of sustainability and FSC certification when we see critical habitat for an endangered species destroyed."

Mr Perry concluded "Until the government has fixed this reckless administration in DPIPWE, any assurances it might offer the public to only approve activities within our wilderness that are respectful and appropriate to the environment will ring hollow indeed".

CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION

ANDREW PERRY (ENVIRONMENT TASMANIA): 0419 73 6868

ERIC WOehler (BIRDLIFE TASMANIA): 0438 204 565