



13 October 2021

Symposium and Exhibition helping save Critically Endangered Victorian Faunal Emblems

On 16 October, the Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater, together with the Friends of Leadbeater's Possum, are hosting an online Symposium that will tackle the key issues facing our Critically Endangered State Faunal emblems: the Helmeted Honeyeater and Leadbeater's Possum. We will also launch an online Art Exhibition to celebrate our Emblems.

Dr Dan Harley, Senior Ecologist at Zoos Victoria, is presenting the keynote address addressing the current state of Helmeted Honeyeater and Leadbeater's Possum populations, including potential future recovery directions.

Dr Harley has been monitoring the population of Leadbeater's Possum at Yellingbo for over 25 years. Habitat restoration, translocation and genetic rescue are major features of his current work.

An expert panel will then cover the key issues including those raised by the audience. Panel members include subject matter experts Bruce Quin, Steve Meacher, Professor Paul Sunnucks, Gaye Gadsden, Ian Smales, Dr Melanie Birtchnell, Kacie Melfi and Sue Tardif.

The Helmeted Honeyeater and Leadbeater's Possum species have benefited from two of the most intensive threatened species recovery efforts in Victoria. Despite the Friends groups making a major contribution to recovery efforts for the Helmeted Honeyeater and the Leadbeater's Possum, the future of our Faunal Emblems remains uncertain.

We would one day like to see our two State Emblems in the same situation as the Eastern Barred Bandicoot, which after an intensive and successful reintroduction program, supported by Zoos Victoria and others, is now reclassified from Extinct in the Wild to Endangered.

We will also launch our online Art Exhibition. The Exhibition will show works from private collections including John Gould, Janet Flinn, David Williams, Peter Voice, Lisa Kennedy, Joanne Percy and Elizabeth Cogley. In addition, we are incredibly grateful for donated art from a wide range of wildlife artists and these pieces will be available for sale.

Our GiveNow Giving campaign will be announced and together, with the support of the Andrews Foundation, we are commissioning Case Studies of both Faunal Emblems for Upper Secondary and VCE Environmental Science students. This will help to engage our young people in the challenges these animals face and encourage the pursuit of environmental science and environmental volunteering to address these issues.

We are grateful for the support of many organisations, from State and Federal Governments to Zoos Victoria, Parks Vic, the Port Philip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority, philanthropic funds, individuals, and our wonderful volunteers.

Tickets are free and available from Eventbrite:

<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/celebrating-50-years-of-our-faunal-emblems-tickets-174093657817>

Symposium: Saturday 16 October 2-4pm
Exhibition Dates: 16 October to 14 November 2021
More info: <https://www.helmetedhoneyeater.org.au/news/latest-news/>

Media inquiries:

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Background Information on the Victorian Faunal Emblems:

As recently as 2010, it was estimated there were only 50 Helmeted Honeyeaters in the wild. While numbers can fluctuate, today there are around 250 birds in three separate colonies. Improving the future for the Critically Endangered Helmeted Honeyeater involves ongoing partnerships with the State Government, agencies including Zoos Victoria, many philanthropic trusts, members and supporters, private landholders, and the participation of hundreds of volunteers including in the Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater's plant nursery. Habitat restoration, community engagement, education, research, and collaboration are critical elements of the Helmeted Honeyeater recovery effort.

The Leadbeater's Possum is Critically Endangered; the small lowland colony at Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve is under especially severe pressure. Unfortunately, efforts to breed the possum in captivity have been unsuccessful. A trial project to move some Leadbeater's Possums from Yellingbo to another location was suspended due to cat predation. Efforts continue to be focused on providing high quality habitat at Yellingbo to support breeding success while other potential release sites are identified and investigated.