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## New report provides key information on endangered King Island birds.

BirdLife Australia and Cradle Coast NRM (a part of the Cradle Coast Authority) are pleased to announce the release of the report on surveys for the critically endangered King Island Scrubtit and King Island Brown Thornbill.

Undertaken by the Australian National University's Difficult Bird Research Group in March 2019, the surveys targeted two of Australia's most endangered, yet least well studied, birds.

"This project has given us a greater understanding of the status of two critically endangered birds on King Island. The project could not have been achieved without the dedicated commitment and contributions from our partner organisations, ANU, BirdLife Australia and DPIPW, said Anna Wind, Coastal Coordinator, Cradle Coast NRM.

Although additional surveys are required, we welcome the news that there are more King Island Brown Thornbills than previously estimated, and that the King Island Scrubtit still survives in remnant patches of vegetation," said Anna.

"Results from these surveys have provided vital information that will help us manage these birds and prevent their extinction," said Dr Jenny Lau, BirdLife Australia's Preventing Extinctions Program Manager.

"Understanding more about where these birds are and what habitat they prefer will allow community and organisations to work together to deliver more effective conservation management" continued Dr Lau.

A 2018 study found that the King Island Brown Thornbill is the Australian bird most likely to become extinct in the next 20 years. The King Island Scrubtit ranked third on the list.

Despite the perilous status of the King Island Scrubtit and King Island Brown Thornbill, the results of this survey provide new hope that their extinction can be averted by developing and implementing effective conservation action.

The report can be downloaded [here](#)

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## Background

- The global populations of the King Island Scrubtit and the King Island Brown Thornbill are wholly restricted to King Island.
- The King Island Scrubtit is listed as Critically Endangered and the King Island Brown Thornbill is listed as Endangered under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (although generally accepted that the Brown Thornbill meets the criteria for Critically Endangered).
- Both birds are recognised as being on the edge of extinction and rely on fragmented, isolated and often degraded patches of native vegetation.
- Population estimates for the King Island Scrubtit and the King Island Brown Thornbill are fewer than 50 mature individuals.
- There remain many key knowledge gaps around the ecology, distribution and density of both the King Island Scrubtit and the King Island Brown Thornbill.

## Summary of survey and findings

- More than 70 sites on King Island were surveyed during March and April 2019.
- Standardised sampling techniques previously used for detecting King Island Scrubtit were found to be effective for the King Island Brown Thornbill.

## King Island Scrubtit

- Population is spread between three isolated locations at Nook Swamps, Pegarah State Forest and Colliers Swamp.
- Detected at 51 sites, scrubtits were recorded at several new sites in Pegarah State Forest.
- Habitat requirements for the scrubtit have previously been described to include *Melaleuca ericifolia* forest and/or the presence of complex understorey and/or forest debris. However, during this survey, scrubtits were recorded at sites absent of *Melaleuca ericifolia* and canopy species but these were present nearby.
- While *Melaleuca ericifolia* swamp forest is a key vegetation community for the King Island Scrubtit, other vegetation communities where *Melaleuca ericifolia* is present can also provide habitat.

## King Island Brown Thornbill

- Recorded at 38 sites and detected in remnant forest patches near agricultural land at locations a considerable distance from Pegarah State Forest. This suggests the King Island Brown Thornbill is likely to occur in suitable habitat elsewhere on the island.
- The King Island Brown Thornbill is distributed across Pegarah State Forest and surrounding habitat.
- Sites where the King Island Brown Thornbill were detected included the presence of Eucalypts (including *E. Brookeriana*, *E. viminalis*, *E. globulus* and possibly *E. ovata*). Habitat considered important for King Island Brown Thornbill should include Eucalypt forest (or woodland) and other vegetation communities where Eucalypts are present.