

Attn editor / chief of staff

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## DNA confirms elusive Night Parrot found

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Work at the Western Australian Museum's recently acquired DNA laboratory has proved conclusively that the Night Parrot – often referred to as the Holy Grail of ornithology – is not extinct.

Queensland bird enthusiast John Young, who has been searching for the elusive Night Parrot for nearly 15 years, sent five feathers from a roost site he found within the Lake Eyre Basin to the Museum's Molecular Systematics Unit for testing, convinced the birds he had been watching were indeed Night Parrots.

The feathers were found to be 100 per cent identical to *Pezoporus occidentalis*, listed as extinct in New South Wales, regionally extinct in Victoria, critically endangered in Western Australia and the Northern Territory, and endangered in Queensland and South Australia.

WA Museum CEO Alec Coles said this was an incredibly significant discovery and one the Museum was very excited to be part of.

"The Night Parrot is a bird many people believed to be extinct up until 1990 and the WA Museum is very pleased to have been asked to authenticate its existence," Mr Coles said.

The man who found the feathers said having them authenticated beyond a shadow of a doubt was the realisation of a dream and the start of a whole new project.

"I've been tracking these birds for nearly 15 years and I've only ever seen them three times, and never before have I been able to get the evidence that would conclusively prove I'd actually found them," Mr Young said.

"Now that I have, I want to help protect them and, in keeping with the wishes of the property owner, I cannot reveal where I found them but hope in the future when another site is found, to be able to share the knowledge with others. For me this is just the beginning – now I want to study their habits, film the complete biology of the bird, share this with others and do what we can to look after them."

The Night Parrot is a medium-sized parrot measuring up to 25cm in length and is predominantly bright green in colour with black and yellow bars, spots and streaks over the body, bright yellow on the belly and vent, and black on the upper surfaces of the wing and tail tips. When on the ground it hops, much like a kangaroo.

Confirmed records of the Night Parrot are limited and most were collected in the late 1800s. Just 24 specimens exist in museum collections. There have been little more than a dozen sightings this Century, and only one since 1990. While so little is known about the species that numbers are difficult to estimate, it is thought there may be as few as 50 breeding pairs left in the wild. There are no Night Parrots in captivity.

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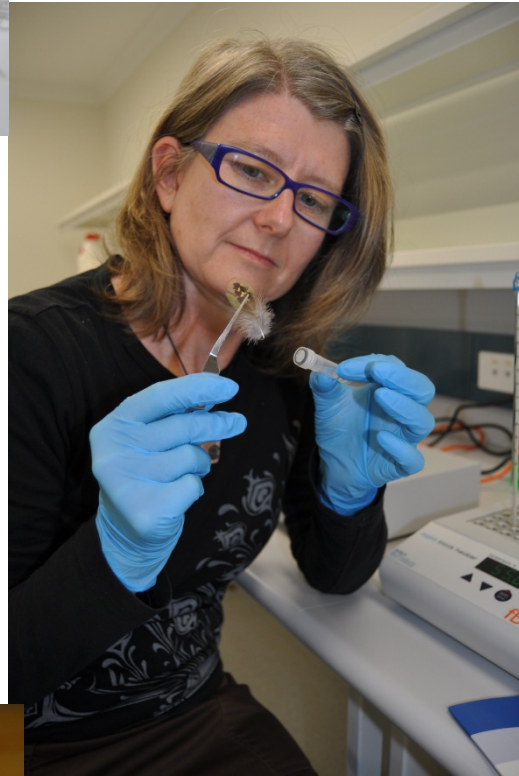
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## Images



The feathers identified as belonging to the Night Parrot. Image courtesy WA Museum

WA Museum technical officer Gaynor Dolman with the Night Parrot feathers. Image courtesy WA Museum



*Pezoporus occidentalis* (Night Parrot)  
Image courtesy South Australian Museum

Interviews are available with John Young via phone on Friday, August 9, between 11:30am and 12:30pm. Please contact the Museum for details:

### **Media contact**

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