

Fairfax Digital

smh.com.au

The Sydney Morning Herald

Environment

Tassie devil, koala make priority list

August 27, 2008 - 5:36PM

The Tasmanian devil and the koala have been included on an Australian government list of animals to be given a priority assessment of their conservation status.

The invariably fatal, contagious devil facial tumour disease has been infecting devils in Tasmania, more than halving the wild devil population since 1996.

Experts warn the feisty marsupial could be extinct by 2020.

The Tasmanian government in May reclassified the devils' conservation status from vulnerable to endangered.

The federal government still has the devil as vulnerable, but could list it as threatened after a review announced by Environment Minister Peter Garrett.

He said the devil was among 20 animals to be assessed as a priority for their conservation status for the purposes of national environmental legislation.

If the devil is assessed as threatened by the federal government, it will earn increased protection and will be considered for conservation and recovery programs, he said.

Mr Garrett's announcement follows a report on Wednesday warning Australia has the worst rate of species extinction in the world.

The Wild Australia Program report was commissioned by conservation groups, the Pew Environment Group and the Nature Conservancy.

The koala has also made Mr Garrett's list.

He said his department was reviewing the National Koala Conservation Strategy with the Australian Koala Foundation and the states and territories.

"The koala is one of our greatest and most loved national icons and the government is committed to ensuring its ongoing conservation," he said.

<http://news.smh.com.au/national/tassie-devil-koala-make-priority-list-20080827-43td.html>

Tassie devil, koala make priority list – Sydney Morning Herald

"Two years ago, koalas were assessed and did not, at that stage, meet the criteria for listing under the Act.


"However, I've made a commitment to reassess the koala for listing and its conservation status will be thoroughly assessed."

Mr Garrett said the Murray River and associated wetlands, floodplains and groundwater systems, from the junction of the Darling River to the sea, including the Coorong, would also be assessed for conservation status.

"This assessment will provide important ecological information for the longer-term management of the Murray River below the Darling junction, and so will complement the work already being undertaken to address the critical problems of the Lower Murray," he said.

Also included in the list was the Patagonian toothfish, the grey-headed albatross, Dons spider orchid, Kuranda tree frog, three woodlands and several aquatic ecological communities.

© 2008 [AAP](#)

Brought to you by  aap