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Media Release
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Birds get healthy new diet as tradition is preserved

Tradition will meet modern conservation as O'Reilly's works with researchers to establish a best practice model for feeding wild birds that will show the way for bird feeding in backyards across Australia.

Visitors come in their thousands each year to feed the birds of Lamington National Park at O'Reilly's and the popular tradition will be retained in a new form, with researcher Michelle Plant undertaking an extensive study into the best practices for bird health and behaviour.

O'Reilly's General Manager Matt Perry said protecting the health of the birds is paramount.

"We are excited about the new program that has been designed to demonstrate use of premium feed, equipment and site management - including hygiene practices, that all work to ensure the best for the wild birds that visit, whilst at the same time providing for the enjoyment of visitors," Mr Perry said.

"The rainforest birds are the icons of Lamington National Park and we want to do all we can to ensure the health of bird populations in the future."

The new practices, to be introduced in November, will mean a healthier diet for the Australian King Parrots and Crimson Rosellas who flock to O'Reilly's, thanks to support by Golden Cob.

General Manager Peter Dickinson said the company was keen to play a practical role in improving on the bird feeding tradition by supplying their breeder's quality seed mix, and providing sponsorship to assist in further developing best practices.

"Very little has been done to investigate wild bird feeding practices in Australia, so we are very glad to be supporting this project and look forward to the outcomes of the study to help guide backyard feeding practices," Mr Dickinson said.

Michelle Plant, who is studying for a PHD with the University of Queensland, will investigate and test the response of the birds and the surrounding environment to new feeding practices at O'Reilly's and is looking for people to volunteer to trial the new protocols in their own backyards.

"Unfortunately there have been reports of fatalities directly linked to poor backyard feeding practices here in Queensland and in New South Wales, but very little information has been available to support feeders choice of appropriate feeds and management of their feeding environment," Ms Plant said.

“O’Reilly’s will be at the forefront of best practice and will provide an excellent reference point for backyard feeders. It is extremely important to select an appropriate feed type for the birds and to undertake to maintain a healthy feeding environment.”

“Whilst it is highly enjoyable watching wild birds visit our backyards, if their health is adversely affected due to poor diet or feeding from unsanitary conditions it is impractical to provide professional health care in this environment – in some cases what is being done to help can actually hinder.”

Research results will be submitted for international publication and a book prepared as a guide for backyard feeders.

This latest research project follows O’Reilly’s support for groundbreaking international research aimed at understanding climate change through studying creepy crawlies.

Leading scientists have conducted two separate month-long studies from O’Reilly’s over the last six months to select groups of insects that are particularly sensitive to climate variations, making them ideal candidates for studying the effects of global warming in what is known as the IBSCA project, led by Griffith University.

“We are pleased to again be involved in research that contributes to conservation, not just to put us at the forefront of ecotourism practices, but to bring about broader benefits for our environment, in this case wild birds frequenting feeders around Australia,” Mr Perry said.

People feeding wild birds in South East Queensland who are interested in participating in the study by trialing recommended practices are invited to register their interest at wildlife@ozwide.net.au.

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