

THE STANDARD

Genetic scientist to put threatened broлга populations to test

By PETER COLLINS June 12, 2015, 4 a.m.

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Dr Adam Miller, an ecological geneticist from the Nature Glenelg Trust and Melbourne University, is carrying out research into Victoria's broлга population. Picture: ROB GUNSTONE

RESEARCH to be undertaken by Warrnambool-based scientist Dr Adam Miller will be crucial in saving the iconic broлга from extinction.

He aims to do an extensive genetic examination of the species to determine the degree of connectivity between the southern and northern Australian populations and if they are worthy of being categorised as specific species.

If his analysis of DNA from blood and feather samples proves distinct differences it will mean

Victoria's flocks are particularly important and potentially elevate them to an 'endangered' conservation status.

Dr Miller, who is with the not-for-profit Nature Glenelg Trust and The University of Melbourne, said "if they are different species it puts the Victorian population in a more endangered situation than we thought".

"This is an independent research program and will assist with general conservation planning for the species.

"The project will also help clarify recent unpublished findings that suggest separate breeding populations might exist in south-west Victoria.

"Genetic descriptions of from the study will provide insights into vulnerability of the species and help identify critical wetland habitats for protection in the region."

While the wind farm debate is not a driver of the project it will provide government, industry and conservation groups with a framework to assist in mitigating risks with more effective placement of wind farms, Dr Miller said.

So far only about 20 per cent of the estimated \$60,000 cost has been raised and the trust is hoping for further donations through its tax deductibility status. Further details are on the Nature Glenelg Trust website.

Dr Miller is a specialist in ecology genetics and has previously done research on several threatened species in the region including the eastern barred bandicoot, orange-bellied parrot, and Glenelg spiny crayfish.

He said populations of many wetland species had declined since European settlement and only half the original wetland habitats remained in the region of which 80 per cent was now on private land.