

TAXON SUMMARY

Southern Boobook (Lord Howe Island)

1	Family	Strigidae
2	Scientific Name	<i>Ninox novaeseelandiae albaria</i> Ramsay, 1888
3	Common Name	Southern Boobook (Lord Howe Island)
4	Conservation status	Extinct

5 Reasons for listing

This subspecies possibly survived until the 1950s, but none have been heard calling since.

6 Intraspecific taxa

N. n. undulata (Norfolk I.) is also Extinct. Support for separation of the remaining Australian subspecies into *N. boobook* (Schodde and Mason, 1997) is equivocal (Norman *et al.*, 1998a,b, Higgins, 1999) and is not followed here. These subspecies, *N. n. lurida* (north-east Queensland), *N. n. boobook* (eastern Australia), *N. n. leucopsis* (Tasmania and Bass Strait Is), *N. n. halmaturina* (Kangaroo I., S. A.) and *N. n. ocellata* (western, northern and inland Australia), are all Least Concern.

7 Past range and abundance

This subspecies of Boobook was endemic to Lord Howe I., and was probably never numerous. Boobooks were last heard calling in the 1950s but which subspecies could not be determined (Hutton, 1991).

8 Ecology

On Lord Howe I., the Boobook was a forest bird that presumably fed on insects and nested in tree hollows (P. Olsen).

9 Reasons for extinction

Between 1918 and 1940 numerous owls were sent to Lord Howe I., including individuals of the Australian Boobook *N. n. boobook*, in an attempt to control a plague of introduced Black Rats *Rattus rattus* (Hindwood, 1940). It has thus been assumed that extinction was caused by competition with other owls, in particular the Masked Owl *Tyto novaehollandiae castanops*, which has persisted since its introduction (McKean and Hindwood, 1965). However the two species are unlikely to have competed for the same food or used the same sized hollows. There are two more likely reasons. One is that the rats themselves, introduced in 1918, prevented successful breeding by

preying on eggs and young, although this did not cause the extinction of the Norfolk Island Boobook.

Alternatively the Masked Owls preyed on the smaller Boobook (P. Olsen).

10 Bibliography

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Comments received from

Stephen Debus, Penny Olsen, David Priddel.