

TAXON SUMMARY

Chestnut-breasted Whiteface

1	Family	Pardalotidae
2	Scientific Name	<i>Aphelocephala pectoralis</i> (Gould, 1871)
3	Common Name	Chestnut-breasted Whiteface
4	Conservation status	Near Threatened: c

5 Reasons for listing

There is no indication of a change in abundance having occurred over the last decade (so not Vulnerable: C2b) but may have declined in density over half its historical range (Near Threatened: c).

	Estimate	Reliability
Extent of occurrence	20,000 km ²	medium
trend	stable	low
Area of occupancy	2,000 km ²	low
trend	stable	low
No. of breeding birds	6,000	medium
trend	stable	low
No. of sub-populations	1	high
Generation time	4 years	low

6 Intraspecific taxa

None described.

7 Past range and abundance

Widely, but patchily distributed in central and northern South Australia (Cox and Pedler, 1977, Stewart, 1977, Drummond, 1988, Pedler, 1992, I. May, J. Reid). The type locality, described as Port Augusta, may actually have been further north (see Ragless, 1969).

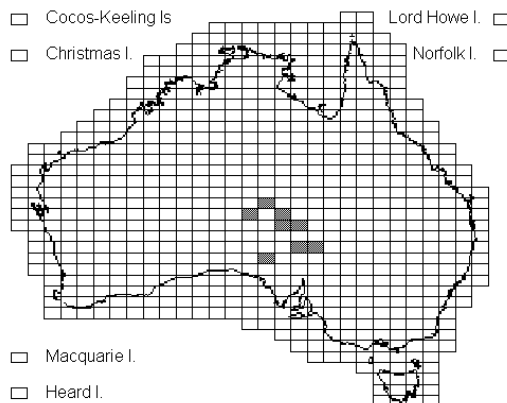
8 Present range and abundance

A survey in 1991 estimated a population of 6,000 based on frequency of observation over northern South Australia, but noted that there was no longer suitable habitat or birds at number of sites from which the species was recorded historically. Birds were found at 14 locations, including 7 of 33 historical sites. Numbers between Lyndhurst and Birdsville Track estimated at fewer than 1,500; Oodnadatta, fewer than 2,000 and between Coober Pedy and Port Augusta fewer than 2,500 (Pedler 1991, 1992). Abundance on a repeat survey in 1999 was similar to 1991 (L. Pedler).

9 Ecology

The Chestnut-breasted Whiteface feeds on the ground, taking seeds and arthropods (Ragless, 1969, Blakers *et al.*, 1984, Pedler, 1991, 1992). There appear to be two important components to the species' preferred habitat - a stony, generally open terrain, and an often patchy cover of perennial chenopod shrubs, in particular Low Bluebush *M. astrotricha* (Pedler,

1992). True stony gibber plains, which are characterised by the absence of perennial shrubs, are therefore avoided. Most observations have been made in hilly or similar stony environments such as tablelands and breakaways, where the topographic relief gives rise to creek lines that frequently carry a denser shrubby vegetation (eg. Drummond, 1988). The whiteface builds a bulky domed nest in shrubs, usually bluebush *Maireana*, and lays 2 eggs (Pedler, 1991).



10 Threats

Grazing by livestock is the primary long-term threat, as it reduces the recruitment of perennial chenopod shrubs. The species has vacated a number of sites from which it was recorded historically (Pedler, 1991, 1992), apparently as a result of heavy grazing of the chenopod shrubland. Ironically, the recent reduction in rabbit numbers may have allowed sufficient build up of fuel for fire to be a threat, particularly if large areas are burnt simultaneously. Also, some patches of habitat are threatened by opal mining (Pedler, 1992).

11 Recommended actions

- 11.1 Determine trends in abundance, particularly in relation to land use.
- 11.2 Monitor population every 5 years.
- 11.3 Draw up management agreements with pastoral managers or traditional owners to maintain the habitat in good condition.

12 Bibliography

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