

TAXON SUMMARY

Chestnut-backed Button-quail

1	Family	Turnicidae
2	Scientific name	<i>Turnix castanota</i> (Gould, 1840)
3	Common name	Chestnut-backed Button-quail
4	Conservation status	Near Threatened: c

5 Reasons for listing

Population density has probably been reduced over half of this species' range (Near Threatened: c). There has also been some contraction in range. However, the species cannot be listed as Vulnerable, as the rate of decline has not been sufficient, and both the population size and range are too great.

	Estimate	Reliability
Extent of occurrence	160,00 km ²	high
trend	stable	low
Area of occupancy	10,000 km ²	low
trend	stable	low
No. of breeding birds	50,000	low
trend	decreasing	medium
No. of sub-populations	2	high
Largest sub-population	40,000	low
Generation time	3 years	low

6 Intraspecific taxa

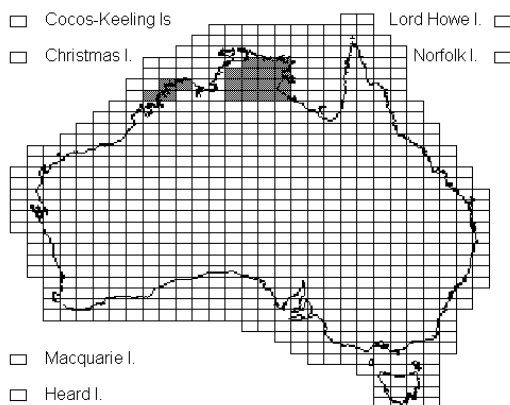
None described.

7 Past range and abundance

Disjunct distribution in Top End, N. T., and Kimberley, W. A. (Blakers *et al.*, 1984). Assumed to breed throughout range (Marchant and Higgins, 1993).

8 Present range and abundance

As above, but recording frequency has decreased throughout range (Franklin, 1999), and the range has contracted from the McArthur R. region (Blakers *et al.*, 1994), where the species was once common (Barnard, 1914).



9 Ecology

Chestnut-backed Button-quail appear to prefer patches of short grass within eucalypt woodland, particularly on stony rises (Storr, 1977, Blakers *et al.*, 1984, Woinarski and Braithwaite, 1991). In the Kimberley, they are most common where basalt meets sandstone (R. E. Johnstone), occurring in parties of up to eight (Johnstone and Storr, 1998). They feed on seeds and insects scratched up from litter and the few nests found have been domes of grass on the ground, and clutch size is usually four (Marchant and Higgins, 1993).

10 Threats

The decline of the Chestnut Button-quail in the McArthur River region, from which the Partridge Pigeon *Geophaps smithii smithii* and Hooded Parrot *Psephotus dissimilis* have also been extirpated, implicates large-scale changes in habitat. Possible causes of decline include grazing by introduced herbivores or inappropriate changes in the fire regime (Franklin, 1999, J. Woinarski). The spread of annual *Sorghum* spp., a consequence of changed fire regime (J. Russell-Smith), may be particularly detrimental to ground-dwelling granivores that require a patchy environment.

11 Recommended actions

- 11.1 Determine characteristics of habitat used by Chestnut-backed Button-quail.
- 11.2 Where possible, match button-quail distribution with patterns of fire and grazing history.
- 11.3 Determine and implement optimum management regime, particularly in protected areas.
- 11.4 Establish captive breeding population as analogue for Buff-breasted Button-quail *Turnix olivii* and to elucidate behavioural ecology.

12 Bibliography

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