

## RECOVERY OUTLINE

# Night Parrot

1	Family	Psittacidae
2	Scientific name	<i>Pezoporus occidentalis</i> (Gould, 1861)
3	Common name	Night Parrot
4	Conservation status	Critically Endangered: B1+2abde, C2b, D

### 5 Reasons for listing

The remaining population of this species is probably highly fragmented (Critically Endangered: B1), and a continuing decline is likely in extent of occurrence (2a), area of occupancy (b), number of locations (d) and number of mature individuals (e). Population size is likely to be very small (D) and declining (C2a), though it is arithmetically impossible for it to decline at the rate required for criterion A and still be extant.

	Estimate	Reliability
Extent of occurrence	3,000,000 km <sup>2</sup>	low
trend	fluctuating	low
Area of occupancy	10 km <sup>2</sup>	low
trend	fluctuating	low
No. of breeding birds	50	low
trend	fluctuating	low
No. of sub-populations	5	low
Largest sub-population	20	low
Generation time	10 years	low

### 6 Intraspecific taxa

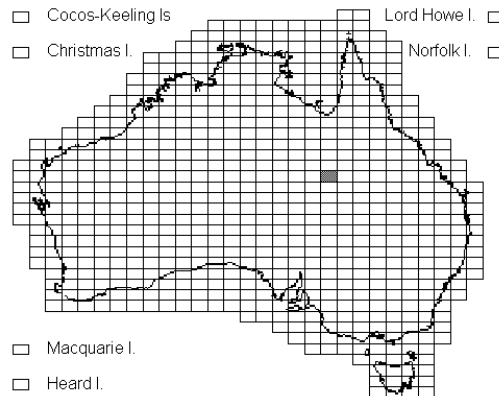
None described.

### 7 Past range and abundance

Records from throughout arid and semi-arid Australia (Menkhorst and Isles, 1981, Schodde and Mason, 1997). Few records since the 1880s (Blyth, 1997).

### 8 Present range and abundance

Possibly occurs at a low density throughout its former range, there having been unverified sight records from inland regions of all mainland states and the Northern Territory (Higgins, 1999). However, at least five dedicated searches and two broad scale publicity campaigns in the last decade have failed to confirm the existence of any population (Davies *et al.*, 1988, Maher, 1995, Jordan, 1996, Blyth *et al.*, 1997, Blyth and Boles, 1999). The only authenticated record (as per map) was from near Boulia, north-western Queensland in 1990 (Boles *et al.*, 1994), where subsequent sightings indicate the species is likely to persist (Garnett *et al.*, 1993, Dingle, 1998). Similarly, sightings continue to be reported from elsewhere in former range (Blyth, 1997, Fitzherbert, 2000) and, while there have been no confirmed sightings in Western Australia since the 1930s, the species is thought to persist in desert country (Mawson and Johnstone, 1997).



### 9 Ecology

Most Night Parrot records come from *Triodia* hummock grassland or chenopod shrublands (Higgins, 1999). However, the most recent specimen and associated reports were in *Astrebla* Mitchell grassland with scattered chenopods (Garnett *et al.*, 1993, Boles *et al.*, 1994). The species may persist in chenopod shrublands during dry years, and move into *Triodia* after there has been sufficient rain to cause grasses to set seed (Parker, 1980). The few nests recorded have both been at the end of tunnels into dense vegetation and contained 3-6 eggs or young (Higgins, 1999).

### 10 Threats

Given the decline in reporting since the 1880s, there has almost certainly been a decline in abundance, but all estimates of population parameters are essentially guesswork. One early account suggests the decline at Innamincka and Alice Springs coincided with the 'arrival' of feral cats (Whitlock, 1924). Factors that have adversely affected medium-sized arid-zone mammals, may have been responsible for the decline of the Night Parrot (Garnett, 1992, Blyth, 1997). These include predation by feral cats and foxes, altered fire regimes, competition for food and degradation of habitat near water by stock or rabbits and reduced availability of water as a result of over-use by feral camels.

### 11 Information required

- 11.1 Develop alternative detection techniques, in particular use of a national team of dogs trained to locate threatened wildlife by scent.
- 11.2 Develop *Ground Parrot* captive husbandry in preparation for Night Parrot capture.

- 11.3 Investigate behaviour, ecology and captive management.
- 12 Recovery objectives
- 12.1 Locate Night Parrots.
- 12.2 Be prepared for rapid action when a sub-population of Night Parrots is found.
- 13 Actions completed or under way
- 13.1 There have been numerous quixotic quests.
- 13.2 A reward of \$50,000 by Dick Smith/Australian Geographic for evidence of the Night Parrot's existence is being used by the Australian Museum on further searches for the Night Parrot.
- 13.3 Appeals for information leading to rediscovery of the Night Parrot have received much publicity in arid Australia, especially in the Northern Territory and Western Australia.
- 13.4 Several convincing reports resulting from 13.3 have been followed up but without success.
- 14 Management actions required
- 14.1 Develop captive-breeding and release techniques using the eastern subspecies of Ground Parrot.
- 14.2 Encourage individuals or voluntary organisations to follow-up any plausible reports of Night Parrot, providing appropriate logistic support.
- 14.3 Use trained dog team to follow-up plausible sightings.
- 14.4 Develop a contingency plan for any site where Night Parrots are found, including a strategy for handling publicity, initiation of ecological studies, capture of birds to establish a captive population, and initiation of fire management and predator control.
- 15 Organisations responsible for conservation  
Environment Australia, New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service, Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, South Australian Department of Environment and Heritage, Victorian Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Western Australian Department of Conservation and Land Management.
- 16 Other organisations involved  
Traditional owners, private land-holders, Adelaide Zoo.

#### 17 Staff and financial resources required for recovery to be carried out

<i>Staff resources required 2001-2005</i>	1.0	<i>Dog handler</i> <sup>1</sup>
	0.3	<i>Curator</i> <sup>2</sup>
	1.0	<i>Project Officer</i> <sup>3</sup>
	1.0	<i>Technical Officer</i> <sup>3</sup>

#### *Financial resources required 2001-2005*

<i>Action</i>	<i>Conservation agencies</i>	<i>Other funding sources</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Training of sniffer dogs</i> <sup>1</sup>	\$10,000	\$50,000	\$60,000
<i>Develop captive breeding techniques using eastern subspecies of Ground Parrot</i> <sup>2</sup>	\$6,000	\$50,000	\$56,000
<i>Search locations where recent sightings have been made</i>	\$2,000	\$30,000	\$32,000
<i>Develop a contingency plan for rediscovery</i>	\$6,000	\$0	\$6,000
<i>Study ecology and behaviour</i> <sup>3</sup>	\$60,000	\$250,000	\$310,000
<i>Control predators and manage fire</i> <sup>3</sup>	\$12,000	\$0	\$12,000
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b>\$96,000</b>	<b>\$380,000</b>	<b>\$476,000</b>

1 Cost shared between Night Parrot and western subspecies of Ground Parrot.

2 Cost shared between Night Parrot and western and eastern subspecies of Ground Parrot.

3 Costs apply only if population discovered.

#### 18 Bibliography

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#### Comments received from

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