

COORDINATED CONSERVATION PLAN

Western Wheatbelt

1 Description

Western wheatbelt of Western Australia. The vegetation is highly diverse, both in terms of community types and floristics. Annual average rainfall declines from about 600 mm in the south-western part of the zone to about 300 mm in the north-east. This gradient is accompanied by a change in vegetation from eucalypt forests through woodlands, mallee and heath to chenopod shrubland.

Most of the region has been cleared for agriculture. Many of the fragments that remain are being degraded by salinisation and weeds with a steady decline in all but the most resilient taxa, a decline that is likely to continue.

2 IBRA Regions

Temperate Slopes and Plains (Avon Wheatbelt, Mallee, Esperance).

3 Core taxa

Locally Extinct

Thick-billed Grasswren (western)

Endangered

Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo

Vulnerable

Malleefowl

Near Threatened

Australian Bustard

Bush Stone-curlew

Hooded Plover (western)

Western Rosella (wheatbelt)

Barking Owl (southern)

Shy Heathwren (western)

Rufous Fieldwren (western wheatbelt)

White-browed Babbler (western wheatbelt)

Crested Shrike-tit (western)

Western Whipbird (western mallee)

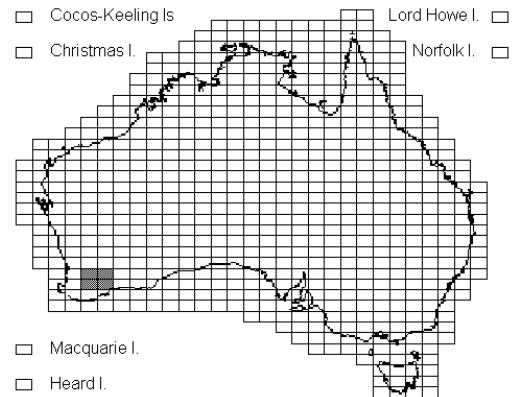
Crested Bellbird (southern)

4 Conservation issues

Clearance for agriculture has eliminated all but a few fragments of habitat. Much of the remnant vegetation is in poor condition and is being degraded by weed invasion, rising soil salinity and grazing by sheep. The effects of clearing will continue for many decades as remnant populations die out and are not replaced.

Habitat loss has affected all woodland species, most of which persist only at the wooded eastern and western margins of the area. The most significant loss has been that of kwongan heath close to breeding areas of Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos. Active regeneration

programs are in place for the cockatoos but, at most sites, the priority of regeneration has been to reduce



water tables and counter spreading salinisation rather than recreate habitat.

There has been a selective loss of large eucalypts which are important as nesting trees for many species, although a shortage of hollows is not yet evident.

Nest-robbing has been a problem for Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo, but is now largely averted through avicultural management. Foxes prey on Bush Stone-curlew, Hooded Plover and Malleefowl but fox control programs are in place.

5 Recommended management

- 5.1 Place significant remnant habitat on public land under secure conservation management, particularly those in transport corridors and local government land.
- 5.2 Manage at least 15% of the pre-European area of all woodland communities on public or private land for nature conservation, using incentives where necessary.
- 5.3 Undertake extension with land-holders that have suitable habitat to promote sound management of remnants, encouraging greater connectivity between sub-populations and reduce grazing pressure.
- 5.4 Re-establish habitat, notably kwongan heath and Salmon Gum woodlands, with the aim of re-instating a full complement of biodiversity.
- 5.5 Continue fox control programs to protect Bush Stone-curlew, Malleefowl and Hooded Plovers and monitor effectiveness.
- 5.6 Identify and protect nesting hollows, and, if hollow availability is limiting, develop a community-based nestbox program.
- 5.7 Monitor population size and trends of core taxa.

5.8 Coordinate conservation management at a regional level.

6 Organisations responsible for conservation

Western Australian Department of Conservation.

7 Other organisations involved

CSIRO Wildlife and Ecology, Landcare groups, Greening Australia, Perth Zoo, bird-watching societies, Western Australian Malleefowl Preservation Society, Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers, Green Corps.

8 References

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