

TAXON SUMMARY

Rufous Scrub-bird (southern)

1	Family	Atrichornithidae
2	Scientific name	<i>Atrichornis rufescens ferrieri</i> Schodde & Mason, 1999
3	Common name	Rufous Scrub-bird (southern)
4	Conservation status	Near Threatened: a

5 Reasons for listing

Over half the habitat of this subspecies has been cleared (Near Threatened: a). The population contains fewer than 4,000 mature individuals and is possibly declining, but there is more than one sub-population (so not C2b), and at least one sub-population with more than 1,000 mature individuals (so not C2a).

	Estimate	Reliability
Extent of occurrence	30,000 km ²	low
trend	stable	high
Area of occupancy	3,440 km ²	medium
trend	decreasing	low
No. of breeding birds	3,440	medium
trend	decreasing	low
No. of sub-populations	3	medium
Largest sub-population	1,400	low
Generation time	5 years	low

6 Intraspecific taxa

A. r. rufescens (Gibraltar Ra., N. S. W. - Mistake Ra., Qld; Schodde and Mason, 1999) is Vulnerable.

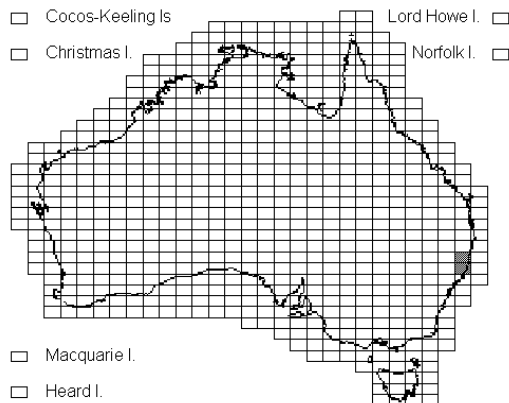
7 Past range and abundance

High rainfall areas between Dorrigo Plateau and Barrington Tops, N. S. W., including lowlands (Chisholm, 1951, Schodde and Mason, 1999). Population size estimated to have been about 14,200 in early 1800s. Even in suitable habitat, territories are widely spaced with a maximum density of six pairs/km² (Ferrier, 1984).

8 Present range and abundance

Known sub-populations are centred on Barrington Tops, Hastings Ra. and Dorrigo/Ebor, mostly above 600 m in altitude (Chisholm, 1951, Smith, 1977, Holmes, 1982, Ferrier, 1984). Modelling suggests that each of these areas is divided into two or more sub-populations (Ferrier, 1984). However a recent lowland record from near Wauchope (Boles and Tynan, 1995) suggests birds may move between disjunct upland habitat patches. Surveys conducted between 1979 and 1983 estimated a total of approximately 1,720 territories (Ferrier, 1984). A survey in late 1999 found substantial numbers in Werrikimbie National Park (Hastings Ra.) with smaller numbers at other sites (Ekert, 2000, A. McIntyre). Anecdotal evidence of a

decline in parts of New England National Park close to agricultural land (Dorrigo/Ebor: A. McIntyre).



9 Ecology

The Rufous Scrub-bird requires dense, metre-high ground cover, a moist microclimate and deep leaf-litter. Suitable habitat occurs in rainforest and adjacent wet eucalypt forest. Habitat in rainforest is usually associated with canopy openings caused by natural tree-falls, selective logging, or watercourses. Habitat in eucalypt forest is only suitable if well buffered from fire by nearby patches of rainforest (Ferrier 1984, 1985). Birds have also been found in low regrowth 50 m from native forest (Boles and Tynan, 1995).

10 Threats

Though most of the bird's lowland habitat was cleared in the 19th century, clearance is not a continuing threat. Remaining eucalypt forest habitat, which supports the majority of the present population, is potentially threatened by inappropriate burning and logging practices (Ferrier, 1984), but the remaining population is under relatively secure tenure. There has also been an unexplained retreat of the birds to higher altitudes, even from uncleared forest (Ferrier, 1984). It is not known if this retreat is continuing.

11 Recommended actions

- 11.1 Obtain modern baseline population sizes for refuge sites and institute monitoring.
- 11.2 Maintain ban on logging in all known territories.
- 11.3 Determine the effect of fire on territory occupation using fire histories of Ferrier (1984).

12 Bibliography

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Text adapted from

Ferrier (1992).

Comments received from

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