

TAXON SUMMARY

Sooty Oystercatcher (northern)

1	Family	Haematopidae
2	Scientific name	<i>Haematopus fuliginosus ophthalmicus</i> Castelnau & Ramsay, 1877
3	Common name	Sooty Oystercatcher (northern)
4	Conservation status	Least Concern

5 Reasons for listing

The subspecies was previously thought to have a low population, but further data from remote coasts north-west of Arnhem Land indicate that the subspecies is common.

	Estimate	Reliability
Extent of occurrence	12,000 km ²	medium
trend	stable	high
Area of occupancy	3,000 km ²	low
trend	stable	high
No. of breeding birds	5,000	low
trend	stable	low
No. of sub-populations	1	medium
Generation time	5 years	low

6 Intraspecific taxa

H. f. fuliginosus (southern Australia) is Least Concern, as is the species. The two subspecies intergrade between Shark Bay and Point Cloates, W. A. (Ford, 1987).

7 Past range and abundance

Disjunct distribution around northern coast and on offshore islands from Pt. Cloates, W. A. to Emu Park, Qld (Marchant and Higgins, 1993).

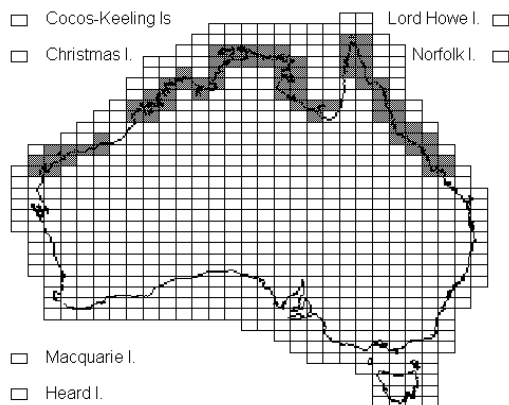
8 Present range and abundance

Distribution as above. Population initially estimated at 1,000 individuals (Lane, 1987) but many remote parts of the coast not included in estimate. Particularly common on Wessel Is and English Company Is, off north-west Arnhem Land (J. C. Z. Woinarski) and Montebello Is, off north-west Australia (A. A. Burbidge).

9 Ecology

The northern subspecies of Sooty Oystercatcher is found on rocky mainland shorelines, as well as on coral cays and reefs, where it forages on intertidal flats for molluscs, crustaceans and other invertebrates.

Sooty Oystercatchers lay two eggs in a scrape in sand or among pebbles (Marchant and Higgins, 1993).



10 Threats

Some pairs on islands that are popular for recreation may be disturbed, but most of population occurs in areas that are unlikely to be much visited in the foreseeable future.

11 Recommended actions

- 11.1 Monitor sub-populations during routine visits to islands, particularly those that are vulnerable to disturbance.

12 Bibliography

- Ford, J. 1987. Hybrid zones in Australian birds. *Emu* 87:158-178.
- Lane, B. A. 1987. *Shorebirds of Australia*. Thomas Nelson, Melbourne.
- Marchant, S. and Higgins, P. J. (eds) 1993. *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds. Vol. 2. Raptors to Lapwings*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

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