

RECOVERY OUTLINE

Western Whipbird (eastern)

1	Family	Eupetidae
2	Scientific name	<i>Psophodes nigrogularis leucogaster</i> Howe & Ross, 1933
3	Common name	Western Whipbird (eastern)
4	Conservation status	Endangered: B1+2bcde

5 Reasons for listing

The area occupied by this subspecies covers less than 500 km² over five locations (Endangered: B1). Because the species takes longer than other birds to re-establish after fire, a continuation of the recent history of destructive fires is likely to result in a further decline in area of occupancy (B2b), quality of habitat (c), number of mature individuals (e) and possibly number of sub-populations (d). The population probably contains about 2,000 mature individuals and is declining, but is not restricted to a single sub-population (so not C2b). Both Eyre and Yorke Peninsula sub-populations probably exceed 250 individuals (so not 2a).

	Estimate	Reliability
Extent of occurrence	30,000 km ²	medium
trend	decreasing	medium
Area of occupancy	200 km ²	low
trend	decreasing	medium
No. of breeding birds	2,000	low
trend	decreasing	medium
No. of sub-populations	5	medium
Largest sub-population	1,000	low
Generation time	5 years	low

6 Intraspecific taxa

P. n. oberon (Stirling Ra. to Ravensthorpe, W. A.) and *P. n. lashmari* (Kangaroo I., S. A.) are both Near Threatened. *P. n. nigrogularis* (Two Peoples Bay-Mt Manypeaks, W. A.) is Vulnerable. On the basis of genetic work showing a close relationship between *P. n. nigrogularis* and *P. n. lashmari* (Christidis and Norman 1999), elevation of *P. n. nigrogularis* to a monotypic species (Schodde and Mason, 1999) is not adopted here.

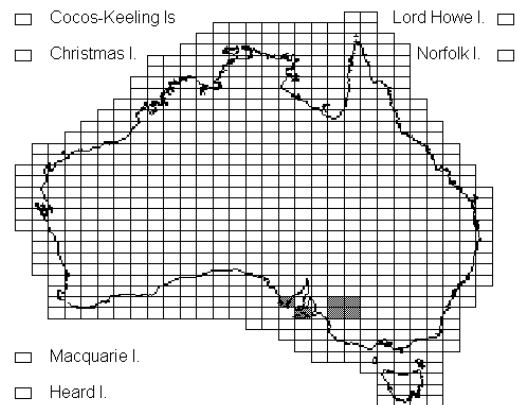
7 Past range and abundance

Southern Eyre Peninsula, Yorke Peninsula and Ninety Mile Plain, S. A., and the mallee of the Big Desert and Sunset Country, Vic. (Schodde and Mason, 1991).

8 Present range and abundance

South Australia: thought to be fewer than 100 individuals in a small number of widely scattered localities: Eyre Peninsula (Coffin Bay to Lincoln National Park), Yorke Peninsula (Innes National Park) and Murray Mallee (Billiat Conservation Park, Ngarkat

and associated Conservation Parks, particularly Mt Rescue Conservation Park; G. Carpenter). Victoria: assumed to persist in the mallee regions of the Sunset Country and Big Desert (Condon, 1966, 1968, Woinarski *et al.*, 1988, Schodde and Mason, 1991, G. Carpenter, L. Pedler), although it has disappeared from a number of sites in Victoria (Woinarski *et al.*, 1988) and there appear to have been no records since the 1980s.



9 Ecology

On Eyre and Yorke Peninsulas, the Western Whipbird occurs in dense vegetation of mallee eucalypts, heath or acacias (Condon, 1966). In the eastern mallee, it occupies thickets with a dense shrubby understorey (1.5-2 m) below an open mallee eucalypt layer (3-5 m). Its habitat is characterised more by vegetation structure than by its floristics. Most records are from vegetation last burnt 10-25 years earlier (Woinarski *et al.*, 1988, L. Pedler). The subspecies appears to feed primarily on insects and builds a domed nest, in which to lay two eggs (Howe and Ross, 1933).

10 Threats

Past clearance of mallee has been responsible for contraction and fragmentation of the range of the subspecies. Fire is currently the major threat. Extensive fires are particularly likely to fragment sub-populations, even in continuous habitat, making recolonisation between fires difficult and leading to local extinctions (Woinarski *et al.*, 1988). A series of recent fires in the range of the eastern sub-populations are likely to have caused a further contraction in range to the few places, like Comet Bore, that are long unburnt (G. Carpenter, L. Pedler).

11 Information required

- 11.1 Determine effects of fire, especially the bird's ability to survive fire and to re-establish sub-populations after fire.
- 11.2 Determine current range, through Birds Australia Atlas and dedicated surveys.
- 11.3 Clarify genetic relationships with other currently recognised subspecies.

12 Recovery objectives

- 12.1 Establish a fire management program that will ensure the conservation of the species within its existing range.
- 12.2 Re-establish the species in areas from which it has been eliminated by fire.

13 Actions completed or under way

None.

14 Management actions required

- 14.1 Monitor known sub-populations.
- 14.2 Manage fire frequency appropriately in suitable habitat.

15 Organisations responsible for conservation

South Australian Department of Environment and Heritage, Victorian Department of Natural Resources and Environment.

16 Other organisations involved

Bird-watching societies, Parks Victoria, University of Adelaide.

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

<i>Staff resources required 2001-2005</i>	0.2	Project Officer ¹
	0.1	Technical Officer ¹
<i>Financial resources required 2001-2005</i>		

<i>Action</i>	<i>Conservation agencies</i>	<i>Other funding sources</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Determine effects of fire</i>	\$50,000	\$0	\$50,000
<i>Survey current distribution¹</i>	\$25,000	\$5,000	\$30,000
<i>Initiate monitoring¹</i>	\$10,000	\$0	\$10,000
<i>Reduce frequency of destructive fires²</i>	\$7,500	\$0	\$7,500
<i>Total</i>	\$92,500	\$5,000	\$97,500

¹ Costs shared with Mallee Emu-wren.

² In addition to routine fire management, costs shared with Mallee Emu-wren.

18 Bibliography

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Comments received from

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