

RECOVERY OUTLINE

Lord Howe Woodhen

1	Family	Rallidae
2	Scientific name	<i>Gallirallus sylvestris</i> (Sclater, 1870)
3	Common name	Lord Howe Woodhen
4	Conservation status	Endangered: D

5 Reasons for listing

The population size of this species appears to have stabilised at around 200 mature individuals (Endangered: D). Any decline would result in listing as Critically Endangered (C2b).

	Estimate	Reliability
Extent of occurrence	3 km ²	high
trend	stable	high
Area of occupancy	2 km ²	high
trend	stable	high
No. of breeding birds	130	high
trend	stable	high
No. of sub-populations	1	high
Generation time	3 years	medium

6 Intraspecific taxa

None described.

7 Past range and abundance

Endemic to Lord Howe I. In 1788, found from sea-level to the tops of the two mountains on the island. From the mid-19th century, confined to summit regions of Mt Gower and Mt Lidgbird, where most birds resided between 1930 to 1980 (Fullagar and Disney, 1975, Hutton, 1991). In 1980s, reintroduced to lowland sites, including isolated steep coastal palm forest at Little Slope and lowland palm forests around settlements (Miller and Mullette, 1985).

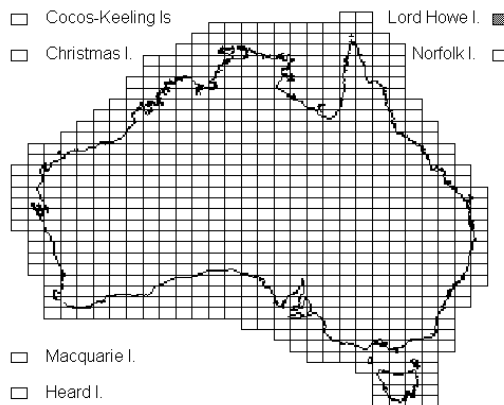
8 Present range and abundance

As above, with highest densities in the Lord Howe I. settlement and on Mt Gower, the population having stabilised at about 200 individuals of which about 130 are mature, with the island's total carrying capacity estimated to be 220 (Brook *et al.*, 1997). Half the present population of the Lord Howe Woodhen occurs around settlements.

9 Ecology

Lord Howe Woodhens are found in closed forest (Pickard, 1983). At high altitudes, they occur in gnarled mossy forest that is characteristic of the mountain summits. At lower altitudes, they are largely confined to megaphyllous broad sclerophyll forest, particularly Kentia Palm *Howea forsterana* forests that grow on igneous soils. They are rarely found in the rainforest subformation that covers most of the island (Harden and Robertshaw, 1988). They forage amongst litter on

the forest floor (Fullagar and Disney, 1975), taking worms, molluscs and invertebrates, which are most abundant in moist igneous soils (Hutton, 1991, R. Harden). They nest on the ground under thick vegetation or in petrel burrows (Miller and Mullette, 1985).



10 Threats

The Lord Howe Woodhen was eliminated from the lowlands in the 19th century as a result of predation by feral pigs, cats, people and their dogs as well as disturbance of their habitat by pigs and goats (Fullagar and Disney, 1975, Miller and Mullette, 1985). Of these, only a few, domestic cats are still present, but goats and pigs have been eliminated, goats almost eliminated, and human predation has stopped. While uncontrolled pet dogs can be a problem, this threat is minimised by general community support for conservation efforts. The introduced Masked Owls *Tyto novaehollandiae castaneothorax*, which are thought to be responsible for a major decline in the number of birds using Little Slope in 1989, remains the only significant threat, apart from catastrophes that could occur to any island. VORTEX analysis suggests the species is still highly susceptible to changes in survival or fecundity (Brook *et al.*, 1997).

11 Information required

- 11.1 Assess the impact of Masked Owls and other introduced birds on Woodhen.

12 Recovery objectives

- 12.1 Maintain or increase current population.
- 12.2 Establish a captive population.

- 13 Actions completed or under way
- 13.1 Successfully bred in captivity and reintroduced to the lowlands.
- 13.2 Pigs, goats and dogs have been controlled or eradicated
- 13.3 Current woodhen-related dog controls are enforced.
- 13.4 Woodhen population is monitored by banding at least annually.
- 14 Management actions required
- 14.1 Ensure woodhen conservation is considered in planning and management of Lord Howe Island.
- 14.2 Review effectiveness of dog controls, and monitor, if necessary.
- 14.3 Eradicate feral goats and other exotic species, as necessary.
- 14.4 Assess the risk of catastrophe and develop a contingency plan, including establishment of a captive population off the island.
- 14.5 Develop and implement guidelines for management of woodhen habitat on leasehold land.
- 14.6 Establish a Recovery Team.
- 15 Organisations responsible for conservation
New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service.
- 16 Other organisations involved
Lord Howe Island Board, National Parks Foundation.

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

Staff resources required 2001-2005 0.05 Project Officer

Financial resources required 2001-2005

Action	Conservation agencies	Other funding sources	Total
Monitor population ¹	\$75,000	\$0	\$75,000
Incorporate woodhen conservation into planning	\$20,000	\$0	\$20,000
Eradicate goats and other pests	\$30,000	\$0	\$30,000
Develop contingency plans in case of catastrophe	\$235,000	\$0	\$235,000
Develop guidelines for managing leasehold land	\$8,000	\$0	\$8,000
Establish a Recovery Team	\$25,000	\$0	\$25,000
Total	\$393,000	\$0	\$393,000

1. Cost includes \$8,000 contributed towards monitoring the Lord Howe Woodhen, Providence Petrel, Kermadec Petrel, Little Shearwater, White-bellied Storm-Petrel, Masked Booby, Grey Ternlet and Pied Currawong

18 Bibliography

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- Text adapted from
Fullagar (1992).
- Comments received from
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