

## **Management Statement**

### **Gran Canaria Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major thanneri*



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Prepared by BirdLife International on behalf of the  
European Commission

# **Management Statement for Gran Canaria Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major thanneri*

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## **Timetable**

First Draft: 15 July 1999

Workshop: 6-7 November 1999

Final Version: 15 December 1999

## **Reviews**

This management statement should be reviewed and updated every five years. An emergency review will be undertaken if sudden major environmental changes occur liable to affect the population within the range of species.

## **Geographical scope**

The action plan needs to be actively implemented in Gran Canaria (Spain)

Line drawing by Dan Powell kindly supplied by the RSPB (BirdLife Partner in the UK)

## Current Status

### 1.1 Distribution

The subspecies is present only in Gran Canaria Island. Another Woodpecker subspecies in the Canary Islands is present on Tenerife Island (*D. m. canariensis*).

It is abundant in the Pajonales, Ojeda and Inagua pine woodlands. It is also present in the San Bartolomé, Las Tederas, Pilancones and Tamadaba pine woodlands (Martín & Cardona, 1989), as well as in the Tirajana, Llanos de la Pez y Pinos de Galdar ones (Martín *et. al.* 1990).

Recent density estimates obtained in the Pajonales Ojeda and Inagua sites equal 4,32 birds/10 ha (Rodríguez & Moreno, 1993), while that of the Pilancones site is 1,71 birds/10 ha (Valido & Delgado, 1997).

Population has been estimated to be 250 pairs (Martín *et. al.*, 1990), although intensive censuses have not been carried out.

### 1.2 Population and trend

Records obtained during the last few years seem to confirm that the subspecies is becoming more abundant. Currently seen in localities where the Woodpecker had not been recorded for past decades, it is also seen in areas outside the pine woodland.

The stability and even increase in the population of the Gran Canaria Woodpecker is consistent with the current protection status of the majority of pine woodland sites on the Island. The subspecies is narrowly linked to the evolution and maintenance of these sites.

### 1.3 Habitat requirements

The subspecies is linked to woodlands of *Pinus canariensis*, of which the mature, well-developed ones are preferred. This Woodpecker is also frequently seen outside the pine woodland areas i.e.: croplands, Chestnut woodlands, and small areas of exotic forest and even in areas intensively used by man.

### 1.4 Conservation status

The species *Dendrocopos major* is listed under Annex II of the Bern Convention and Annex II of the National Catalogue of Threatened Species. It is also included as a subspecies *D. m. thanneri*, in Annex I of the Birds Directive.

Furthermore, the subspecies is classified as Rare in the Canaries' Red List of Terrestrial Vertebrates (Martín *et. al.* 1990), and in the Spain's Red List of Vertebrates (Blanco & González 1992).

### 1.5 Record key sites for the subspecies by country

Most of the area of habitat for the subspecies is statutorily protected under different headings such as Nature Reserves and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). In addition, although not statutorily recognised, most of the suitable habitat has been identified as Important Bird Area (IBA).

## **Threats and limiting factors**

### **Habitat Destruction**

This factor must have been the main threat for the subspecies in the past given the intensive forest clearing undertaken in the Gran Canaria pine woodlands. This in turn led to significant habitat loss and fragmentation. Afforestation on the island started in the 1940s.

Importance: low/medium.

### **Loss of suitable nesting sites**

Although no specific research has been carried out on this particular issue, several authors have pointed out that the loss of suitable nesting sites for the subspecies due to the use of dead wood is a limiting factor (Martín 1990). The traditional belief that it is a source of forest disease (plagues) and also increases the risk of forest fires has further contributed to scarceness of dead wood.

Importance: medium

### **Forest clean up**

The practice of forest clean up has had a clearly negative effect on the conservation of the Gran Canaria Woodpecker (Blanco & González 1992). The current influence of such a practice in the subspecies is not known.

Importance: unknown

### **Illegal hunting**

This subspecies has been subject to illegal hunting during the last decades (Blanco & González 1992). Although the degree to which the subspecies is currently affected is not known, it is thought to be low.

Importance: unknown, probably low.

## **Current conservation actions**

**1988:** The designation of SPAs for Annex I species under the Birds Directive takes place. So far, 4 SPAs have been classified where the Gran Canaria Great Spotted Woodpecker is present, namely SPA nº 041 Ojeda Inagua y Pajonales, SPA nº 110 Ayagaures y Pilancones, SPA nº 111 Tamadaba and SPA nº 113 Macizo de Tauro.

**1989:** Approval of the Spanish Nature Conservation Act (Ley 4/89 de Conservación de los Espacios Naturales y de la Flora y Fauna Silvestres), and classification of the Woodpecker as species of 'Special Interest' in the National Catalogue of Threatened Species (Royal Decree 439/90).

**1994:** Approval of the new Canaries' Nature Protection Act, which includes five protected sites, covering most of the habitat for the subspecies. These are: Inagua Integral Nature Reserve, Tamadaba Natural Park, Pilancones Natural Park, Tauro Natural Monument and Roque Nublo Natural Park.

**1998:** SEO/BirdLife publishes the review of the Spanish IBA inventory (Viada 1998). Four of these areas are of particular importance for the Woodpecker: Pinar de Tirajana

(IBA n° 352), Pinar de Tauro (IBA n° 353), Pinares de Pajonales, Ojeda, Inagua y La Data (IBA n° 354) and Pinar de Tamadaba (IBA n° 355).

## **Aim and Objectives**

### **Aim**

The aim of this management statement is to maintain the current protection status for the species and improve its habitat.

#### 1. Policies and legislation

##### 1.1 Management Plans

All protected areas should develop Management Plans which should take into consideration the presence of the sub-species and its limiting factors. In particular the plans should regulate the removal of dead wood which represent a limiting factor for the breeding of the species.

Priority: medium

Time-scale: short

##### 1.2 Forestry plan

A Canary Island Forestry Plan should be developed. Such plan should promote the re-forestation with *Pinus canariensis* and forestry practice compatible with the presence of the sub-species.

Priority: Medium

Time-scale: medium

## References

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