

TAXON SUMMARY

Bush Stone-curlew

1	Family	Burhinidae
2	Scientific name	<i>Burhinus grallarius</i> (Latham, 1801)
3	Common name	Bush Stone-curlew
4	Conservation status	Near Threatened: c

5 Reasons for listing

Although the species is still relatively common in the north and on islands, the population occurs at a fraction of its former density in southern mainland Australia (Near Threatened: c). Because most of the population occurs in Australia, global status is also Near Threatened.

Australian population	Estimate	Reliability
Extent of occurrence	6,000,000 km ²	high
trend	decreasing	medium
Area of occupancy	100,000 km ²	low
trend	decreasing	medium
No. of breeding birds	150,000	low
trend	decreasing	low
No. of sub-populations	1	low
Generation time	5 years	low
Global population share	99 %	high
Level of genetic exchange	low	high

6 Intraspecific taxa

None described.

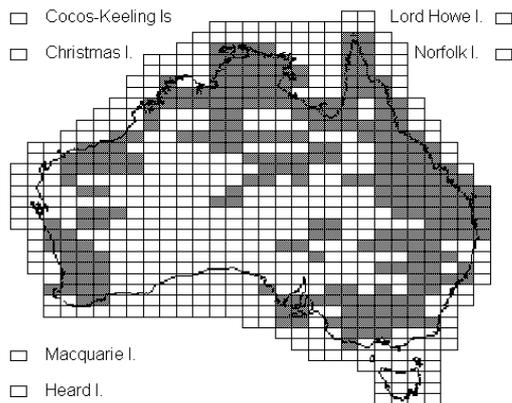
7 Past range and abundance

Recorded from all but the most arid parts of mainland Australia, as well as on many offshore islands, although not in Bass Strait and only accidental in Tasmania (Blakers *et al.*, 1984, Marchant and Higgins, 1993). A breeding population also occurs in southern New Guinea (Marchant and Higgins, 1993).

8 Present range and abundance

Almost absent south and east of Great Dividing Range between Port Fairy, Vic., and Brisbane (Blakers *et al.*, 1984). Scarce elsewhere in southern Australia. Numbers in northern Victorian apparently decreasing, with counts of 328 birds in 1985 and 141 birds in 1991 (Johnson and Baker-Gabb, 1994, Webster and Baker-Gabb, 1993). Recent records from South Australia mostly from islands (Blakers *et al.*, 1984). Decreasing in south-western Australia from 1920s (Johnstone and Storr, 1998). In northern Australia and on many continental islands, species remains common, even within towns (Garnett, 1992). However, decreased near Rockhampton (Wilson, 1993) and in south-east Queensland (R. Johnson), largely absent south and east of the Great Dividing R. (A. Applemann). Genetic status of island birds is

unknown; possibly isolated sub-populations as no evidence of movement across major water. Current Australian population estimated at 15,000 individuals (Watkins, 1993).



9 Ecology

Bush Stone-curlews require sparsely grassed, lightly-timbered, open forest or woodland. In southern Australia, they persist most often where there is often with a well-structured litter layer and fallen timber debris (Blakers *et al.*, 1984, Marchant and Higgins, 1993, Johnson and Baker-Gabb, 1994), but in parts of northern Australia, seem able to persist where the ground cover is more open (A. Applemann). They are thought to be sedentary, but abundance in central Australia appears to vary with rainfall (K. Johnson). They lay one or two eggs on the ground in open areas, usually well away from trees (Johnson and Baker-Gabb, 1994), and feed on a range of invertebrates and small vertebrates, as well as seeds and shoots (Marchant and Higgins, 1993).

10 Threats

The rarity and continuing decline of Bush Stone-Curlews in the southern part of the species' range has been attributed to predation by introduced foxes, habitat clearance for agriculture, habitat degradation by pastoralism, and removal of leaf litter and fallen timber debris from habitat remnants (Johnson and Baker-Gabb, 1994). At one site in Western Australia, the species re-appeared five years after intensive fox-baiting was undertaken (S. McNee). The species was formerly hunted legally, and continues to be so illegally (Marchant and Higgins, 1993, G. Graham).

11 Recommended actions

- 11.1 Develop effective techniques for monitoring abundance.
- 11.2 Determine the minimum area of woodland needed to maintain sub-populations and incorporate where necessary into land-clearing guidelines.
- 11.3 Develop agreements with land-holders to maintain litter layer and fallen timber debris within wooded remnants.
- 11.4 Improve fox control around remnant sub-populations.
- 11.5 Compare abundance in areas with and without rabbit baiting and, if appropriate, promote baits that are unattractive to stone-curlews.

12 Bibliography

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