

RECOVERY OUTLINE

Christmas Island White-eye

1	Family	Zosteropidae
2	Scientific name	<i>Zosterops natalis</i> Lister, 1889
3	Common name	Christmas Island White-eye
4	Conservation status	Critically Endangered: A2ce

5 Reasons for listing

This species is expected to decline by more than 80% over the next ten years (Critically Endangered: A2) because of a decline in habitat quality (c) and the rapid spread of a new threat (e).

	Estimate	Reliability
Extent of occurrence	137 km ²	high
trend	stable	high
Area of occupancy	100 km ²	high
trend	decreasing	medium
No. of breeding birds	20,000	low
trend	decreasing	medium
No. of sub-populations	1	high
Generation time	3 years	low

6 Intraspecific taxa

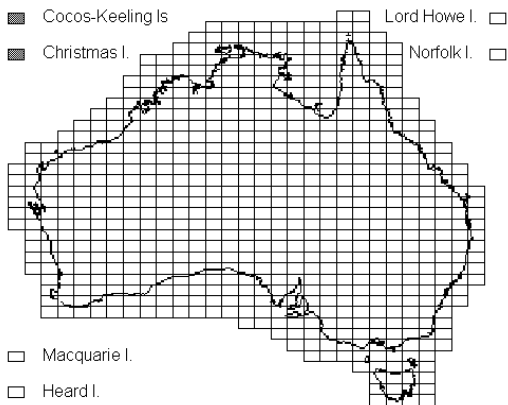
None described.

7 Past range and abundance

Confined to Christmas I., Indian Ocean (Stokes, 1988).

8 Present range and abundance

Natural range as above, with area of occupancy reduced by about a third as a result of mining. Most numerous bird on the island (Stokes, 1988). Birds were also introduced to Cocos Keeling Is. between 1885 and 1900 (Long, 1981) but apparently persist only around the settlement (Stokes *et al.*, 1984).



9 Ecology

The Christmas Island White-eye occupies all forested habitats, as no other species seeks food between the canopy and the lower bole zone (Stokes, 1988).

10 Threats

The disappearance of white-eyes from Norfolk and Lord Howe Is suggests that island populations of *Zosterops* are particularly vulnerable to extinction. Even though the Christmas Island White-eye is currently the most abundant bird species on the island, and is established on Cocos-Keeling Is, it is threatened on Christmas I. by the Yellow Crazy Ant *Anoplolepis gracilipes*, which occupies 15-18% of the land area (D. Slip), and may still be spreading rapidly. These ants probably prey directly on nestlings and may alter the whole ecology of the island by killing the dominant life-form, the Red Crab *Gecaroidea natalis*, and by farming scale insects which damage trees (O'Dowd *et al.*, 1999). Disappearance of Red Crabs may also allow spread of introduced Black Rats *Rattus rattus*, which have been responsible for the extinction of white-eyes on other islands.

11 Information required

11.1 Refine techniques for controlling Yellow Crazy Ant.

12 Recovery objectives

12.1 Maintain existing population.

12.2 Yellow Crazy Ant brought under control.

13 Actions completed or under way

13.1 Contingency plans are being developed to establish a captive population on mainland Australia.

13.2 A three year research program has been initiated and staff have been dedicated to ant control.

14 Management actions required

14.1 Control abundance and spread of the Yellow Crazy Ant.

14.2 Pending control, establish a captive population with the aim of reintroduction once ant control has been achieved.

15 Organisations responsible for conservation

Environment Australia (including Wildlife Australia Branch; Parks Australia North; Christmas Island Rainforest Rehabilitation Program).

