

TAXON SUMMARY

# Flock Bronzewing

1	Family	Columbidae
2	Scientific name	<i>Phaps histrionica</i> (Gould, 1841)
3	Common name	Flock Bronzewing
4	Conservation status	Near Threatened: c

5 Reasons for listing

This species experiences large seasonal fluctuations in both range and population size, but analysis suggests its density has decreased substantially (Near Threatened: c). Although the range may have contracted, not by as much as 50% (so not a).

	Estimate	Reliability
Extent of occurrence:	2,500,000 km <sup>2</sup>	high
trend:	decreasing	low
Area of occupancy:	200,000 km <sup>2</sup>	low
trend:	decreasing	low
Estimated population:	200,000	low
trend:	fluctuating	high
No. of sub-populations:	1	high
Generation time:	5 years	low

6 Intra-specific taxa

None described.

7 Past range and abundance

Recorded periodically, often breeding, within a broad sweep from Western Australia, north of 25°S, through Northern Territory and north-east South Australia, to eastern Queensland and western New South Wales, as far south as Booligal (McAllan, 1996, Higgins and Davies, 1996, Schodde and Mason, 1997). Population irruptive, making population estimates difficult, with estimates between thousands and “millions” at various times, in various places (Badman, 1989, McAllan, 1996, Higgins and Davies, 1996).

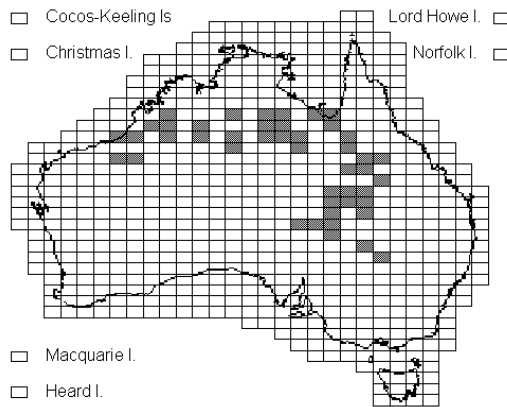
8 Present range and abundance

Significant contraction in range and decrease in reporting rate (McAllan, 1996, Franklin, 1999). Despite periodic irruptions into western New South Wales, northern South Australia and eastern Queensland, no recent records from much of the species’ former range in eastern Queensland and New South Wales. Still periodically and patchily common in the semi-arid tropics and subtropics, with records of flocks of 100,000 individuals in the 1980s and 1990s (McAllan, 1996, H. A. Nix).

9 Ecology

Flock Bronzewings are mainly found in open Mitchell Grass *Astrelba pectinata* grasslands on black soil plains, but also frequent saltbush *Atriplex*, bluebush *Maireana*

and *Triodia* hummock grasslands, grassy woodlands, recently burnt areas, roadsides and agricultural land, particularly favouring run-on areas (Higgins and Davies, 1996, McAllan, 1996). They nest on bare ground, in the shelter of low vegetation (Higgins and Davies, 1996), and feed on bare areas, taking seeds and shoots of gramineous and herbaceous plants. They are often associated with permanent water (MacGillivray, 1932, Frith *et al.*, 1976). Records of large numbers appear to follow sustained periods of favourable conditions (Higgins and Davies, 1996).



10 Threats

The contraction of the range of the Flock Bronzewing in eastern Australia has been coincident with expansion of pastoralism and agriculture (McAllan, 1996, Franklin, 1999), and it is possible that pastoral management, conversion of land to agriculture and overgrazing by stock and rabbits has rendered much habitat unsuitable (MacGillivray, 1932, McAllan, 1996). The area of decline, however, also corresponds to the distribution of foxes. Although initially swamping the impact of predators (McAllan, 1996), it may be that irruptive flocks can no longer persist in areas where foxes are present. Fox predation would also be consistent with the survival of Flock Bronzewings in heavily stocked parts of New South Wales until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A more recent threat is the spread of exotic woody weeds, such as Prickly Acacia *Acacia nilotica*, in the Mitchell Grass plains (Sattler and Williams, 1999).

11 Recommended actions

11.1 Develop an effective monitoring technique.

- 11.2 Locate areas of core distribution during successive dry years.
- 11.3 Determine effects of foxes on breeding and survival in southern fringe of range.

## 12 Bibliography

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