

TAXON SUMMARY

Great-billed Heron

1	Family	Ardeidae
2	Scientific name	<i>Ardea sumatrana</i> Raffles, 1822
3	Common name	Great-billed Heron
4	Conservation status	Least Concern

5 Reasons for listing

Although the species occurs at lower densities than other Australian herons, its population probably exceeds 3,000 (so not Near Threatened: d), and there are no threats substantial enough to result in decline. Global status of the species is Near Threatened but as there is unlikely to be substantial genetic exchange, the Australian status is assessed independently (as per Gärdenfors *et al.*, 1999).

Australian population	Estimate	Reliability
Extent of occurrence	10,000 km ²	medium
trend	stable	medium
Area of occupancy	2,000 km ²	medium
trend	stable	medium
No. of breeding birds	5,000	low
trend	stable	medium
No. of sub-populations	1	high
Generation time	5 years	low
Global population share	30 %	low
Level of genetic exchange	low	medium

6 Intraspecific taxa

None described.

7 Past range and abundance

Found on islands and along coasts of south-east Asia, New Guinea and northern Australia (Marchant and Higgins, 1990). Within Australia, recorded in tropical and sub-tropical, near-coastal environments between northern New South Wales and Broome, W. A. (Marchant and Higgins, 1990, Johnstone and Storr, 1998). Breeding probably throughout range, but few records (Marchant and Higgins, 1990). No estimates of historical population size.

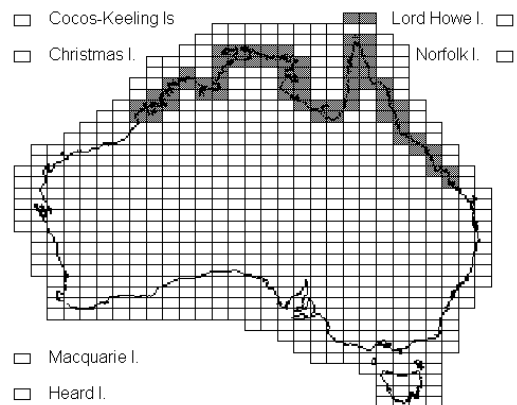
8 Present range and abundance

Australian range has probably contracted northwards up the east coast, and there are no recent records south of Rockhampton (Marchant and Higgins, 1990), but population probably stable through rest of range.

9 Ecology

The Great-billed Heron nests in mangroves and forages on coastal and near-coastal muddy shores in the tropics and sub-tropics (Marchant and Higgins, 1990). It feeds on mudflats, taking fish, reptiles and possibly invertebrates (Marchant and Higgins, 1990).

It seems to prefer concealed nesting sites and to feed near shelter (Marchant and Higgins, 1990).



10 Threats

Clearance of mangroves and other coastal vegetation, reclamation of mudflats and other forms of human disturbance are likely to cause desertion of breeding areas (Marchant and Higgins, 1990).

11 Recommended actions

- 11.1 Where possible, monitor Great-billed Heron numbers in the evening, during surveys of selected rivers in northern Australia for Estuarine Crocodiles.
- 11.2 Document distribution of Great-billed Heron at extremities of range, particularly in the Rockhampton area of Queensland and near Broome and Derby in Western Australia.

12 Bibliography

- Gärdenfors, U., Rodriguez, J.P., Hilton-Taylor, C., Hyslop, C., Mace, G., Molur, S. and Poss, S. 1999. Draft guidelines for the Application of IUCN Red List Criteria at National and Regional Levels. *Species* 31-32:58-70.
- Johnstone, R. E. and Storr, G. M. 1998. *Handbook of Western Australian Birds. Vol. 1. Non-passerines (Emu to Dollarbird)*. W. A. Museum, Perth.
- Marchant, S. and Higgins, P. J. (eds) 1990. *The Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

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