

RECOVERY OUTLINE

Golden-shouldered Parrot

1	Family	Psittacidae
2	Scientific name	<i>Psephotus chrysopterygius</i> Gould, 1857
3	Common name	Golden-shouldered Parrot
4	Conservation status	Endangered: B1+2abce

5 Reasons for listing

The species occurs at two locations (B1), and a continuing decline has been observed (B2) in extent of occurrence (a), area of occupancy (b), habitat quality (c) and number of mature individuals (e).

	Estimate	Reliability
Extent of occurrence	3,000 km ²	medium
trend	decreasing	high
Area of occupancy	1,500 km ²	medium
trend	decreasing	high
No. of breeding birds	2,000	medium
trend	decreasing	high
No. of sub-populations	2	medium
Largest sub-population	1,000	medium

6 Intraspecific taxa

None described.

7 Past range and abundance

Endemic to southern and central Cape York Peninsula, Qld, between Weipa, Normanton, Bulleringa, Port Stewart and Coen (Garnett and Crowley, 1995a, 1997, Garnett, 1998). Probably always patchily distributed. Three confirmed breeding sub-populations: Coen to Port Stewart, Musgrave-Morehead R. and west of Chillagoe, with a possible further breeding sub-population at Bulleringa National Park (J. Borgat). All reports outside these areas, including the type specimen, were of non-breeding birds.

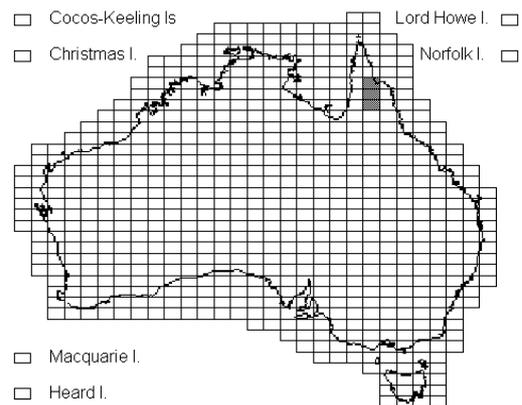
8 Present range and abundance

Last recorded in the Coen to Port Stewart area in 1920s (Thomson, 1935, A. Coleman, I. Taylor). Musgrave-Morehead R. sub-population has contracted markedly, and continues to decline, with the last nests on Violetvale reported in the 1970s (Weaver, 1982), and a continuing decline to 1998 (Garnett and Crowley, 1998). Sub-population from west of Chillagoe persists, but information on trends not yet available.

9 Ecology

The Golden-shouldered Parrot nests in termite mounds on grassy areas within ti-tree *Melaleuca* spp. or Shiny-leaved Box *Eucalyptus chlorophylla* savannas. After breeding, the birds disperse through open Darwin Stringybark *E. tetradonta* woodland, concentrating their

feeding activity on the super-abundant seeds of fire grasses *Schizachyrium*, on which they need to forage for less than 2 hours a day (Garnett and Crowley, 1995a, Crowley and Garnett, 1999). After the first wet season rains, seed availability declines and the parrots switch foods continually, feeding through most of the daylight hours. Nesting begins in the late wet season, as seeds of perennial grass and green legumes become abundant. Nests are excavated in termite mounds. Clutch size averages about 6 (Garnett and Crowley, 1995a).



10 Threats

The continuing contraction in range of the Golden-shouldered Parrot has been linked to a change in fire regime, with an avoidance of intentionally hot burns in areas under pastoral management (Crowley and Garnett, 2000), and lower fuel loads as a result of cattle grazing. These two factors are thought to have caused an invasion of grassland by woodland (Stanton, 1992, Neldner *et al.*, 1997, Crowley and Garnett, 1998) which, in turn, appears to increase the success rate of the parrot's predators. Pied Butcherbirds *Cracticus nigrogularis*, which can take advantage of the increased vegetation density to ambush prey, are thought to be the most significant predators. The parrots are particularly vulnerable to predation when feeding on the ground. Extended ground feeding is necessary from the first rains, when annual grass seed germinates, until the end of the breeding season. In the early wet season most parrots gain some protection from predators by feeding in association with nesting Black-faced Woodswallows *Artamus cinereus normani*, which act as sentinels for the feeding parrots. This subspecies, however, is Near Threatened, also having

18 Bibliography

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