

TAXON SUMMARY

Latham's Snipe

1	Family	Scolopacidae
2	Scientific name	<i>Gallinago hardwickii</i> (J. E. Gray, 1931)
3	Common name	Latham's Snipe
4	Conservation status	Least Concern
	Population visiting Australian territory	Least Concern

5 Reasons for listing

While loss of wetlands has reduced the habitat of this species, and thus its population, area of occupancy is unlikely to have been halved (Near Threatened: c) as some habitat has also been created, and the birds are well able to cope with habitat ephemerality.

	Estimate	Reliability
Extent of occurrence	3,000,000 km ²	high
trend	stable	high
Area of occupancy	3,000 km ²	low
trend	decreasing	medium
No. of breeding birds	15,000	low
trend	stable	low
No. of sub-populations	1	high
Generation time	5 years	low

6 Intraspecific taxa

None described.

7 Past range and abundance

Migrant between Japan and eastern Russia, where they breed during the northern summer (Naarding, 1986, Nechaev, 1994), and eastern Australia. Commonly recorded through the wetter parts of eastern Australia, including throughout Tasmania and the Bass Strait Islands. Occasional records further west on Australian mainland, as well as Norfolk I., Lord Howe I. and, possibly, Macquarie I. (Higgins and Davies, 1996).

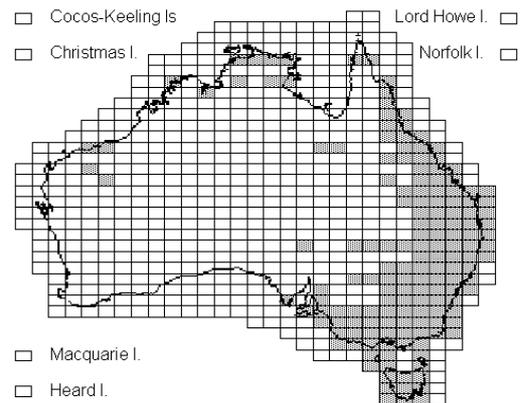
8 Present range and abundance

Australian distribution as above, but population thought to have decreased during period of hunting between 1900 and 1980s, with only marginal, subsequent increases (Naarding, 1986, Higgins and Davies, 1996). Breeding population in Hokkaido, Japan estimated at 37,000 birds, 15,000 of them reaching Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia (Naarding, 1986). Population elsewhere in breeding range unknown, but could be increasing in Russia (Nechaev, 1994).

9 Ecology

Within Australia, Latham's Snipe uses a variety of freshwater or brackish wetlands, preferring to be close to protective vegetation cover. It mainly feeds on small invertebrates, as well as seeds and vegetation

(Todd, 2000). All breeding is in the northern hemisphere (Higgins and Davies, 1996).



10 Threats

Until the mid-1980s, hunting on the freshwater swamps in southern Australia was responsible for the deaths of up to 10,000 Latham's Snipe each year (Naarding, 1986). Current threats in Australia are drainage, water division and urban development, although the species readily occupies artificial and ephemeral swamps. Mowing of habitat during summer can render habitat unsuitable for months at a time (M. A. Weston). Habitat loss and increased fox predation could be affecting the breeding population in Japan (Weston, 1998), but the population in Russia may be increasing (Nechaev, 1994). Grasslands on Cape York Peninsula used during transit north (Garnett and Shephard, 1997), are slowly being occluded by trees (Crowley and Garnett, 1998), but not at a rate that currently threatens the species.

11 Recommended actions

- 11.1 Develop and apply reliable techniques for monitoring regional abundance of the species and relative importance of habitat patches.
- 11.2 Assess importance of habitat patches before alienation by drainage or other development.

12 Bibliography

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