

TAXON SUMMARY

Major Mitchell's Cockatoo (eastern)

1	Family	Cacatuidae
2	Scientific name	<i>Cacatua leadbeateri leadbeateri</i> (Vigors, 1831)
3	Common name	Major Mitchell's Cockatoo (eastern)
4	Conservation status	Near Threatened: c

5 Reasons for listing

Although the subspecies is still numerous in places, historical records suggest that it has declined in density over at least half its former distribution (Near Threatened: c).

	Estimate	Reliability
Extent of occurrence	750,000 km ²	high
trend	stable	high
Area of occupancy	25,000 km ²	low
trend	stable	medium
No. of breeding birds	50,000	low
trend	stable	medium
No. of sub-populations	1	high
Largest sub-population	50,000	low
Generation time	5 years	medium

6 Intraspecific taxa

C. l. mollis (central and western arid zone and Nullarbor, west of the Eyre basin and Port Augusta) is Least Concern, as is the species' status.

7 Past range and abundance

Murray-Darling, Eyre and Bulloo River basins as far north as Isisford and Roma in Queensland, through western New South Wales to north-west Victoria and west to Adelaide and Mt Mary Plains (Schodde and Mason, 1997, Higgins, 1999).

8 Present range and abundance

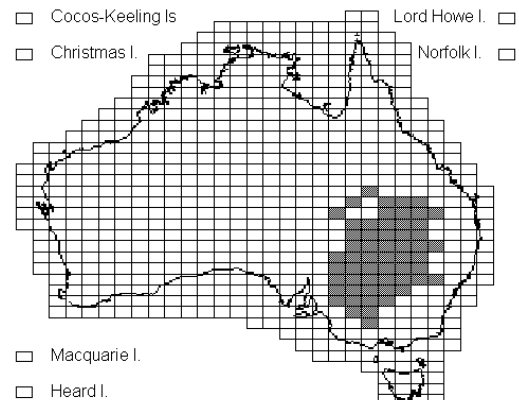
Disappeared from the Adelaide and Mt Mary Plains by the 1950s (Boehm, 1961) and density greatly reduced in north-west Victoria (Emison *et al.*, 1987) and western New South Wales (Cooper and McAllan, 1995).

9 Ecology

The eastern subspecies of Major Mitchell's Cockatoo is found in arid and semi-arid zone woodlands dominated by Mulga *Acacia aneura*, mallee and box eucalypts, cypress pine *Callitris* or Belah *Casuarina cristata*, where it feeds primarily on seeds, roots and fruits. The main requirements of the species are trees with suitable nesting hollows and fresh surface water (Higgins, 1999). Breeding pairs of the western subspecies occupy nests that are at least 1 km apart, and have densities of about one pair per 30 km² (Saunders *et al.* 1985, Rowley and Chapman, 1991).

10 Threats

Clearance of feeding and breeding habitat has substantially reduced the population size of Major Mitchell's Cockatoo in the southern and eastern parts of the species' range, and is continuing. Grazing and weed invasion are also impeding recruitment of trees that will be used for breeding in the future (Emison *et al.* 1987, Ayers *et al.* 1996, Higgins, 1999). Nest robbing and trapping for aviculture are thought to have been a major cause of decline in South Australia and may be a significant threat elsewhere in the range (Ayers *et al.*, 1996, Higgins, 1999).



11 Recommended actions

- 11.1 Monitoring of trends in population size, possibly using car-based counts.
- 11.2 Monitoring of known nest sites to determine level of loss to bird trade.
- 11.3 Ensure, before approval of clearing applications, that nesting and feeding habitat are secured in reserved areas of adequate size.
- 11.4 Improve husbandry techniques to ensure avicultural requirements met by captive breeding and exploration of the feasibility of DNA fingerprinting and micro-chipping the captive population.

12 Bibliography

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