

RECOVERY OUTLINE

Painted Snipe (Australian)

1	Family	Rostratulidae
2	Scientific name	<i>Rostratula benghalensis australis</i> (Gould, 1838)
3	Common name	Painted Snipe (Australian)
4	Conservation status	Vulnerable: A1b

5 Reasons for listing

Recent analysis suggests numbers of this subspecies have decreased over the last 40 years, particularly in southern Australia. This decline, probably from 20 to 50% every three generations (estimated at 15 years), has continued in the last decade (Vulnerable: A1b).

	Estimate	Reliability
Extent of occurrence	4,500,000 km ²	low
trend	stable	low
Area of occupancy	1,000 km ²	low
trend	decreasing	low
No. of breeding birds	5,000	low
trend	decreasing	high
No. of sub-populations	1	high
Generation time	5 years	low

6 Intraspecific taxa

The nominate subspecies (Asia, Africa) does not occur in Australian territory. Recent analysis of measurements and anatomy suggest that *R. b. australis* is a full species (Lane and Rogers, 2000). Under current taxonomy, global status of species is Least Concern.

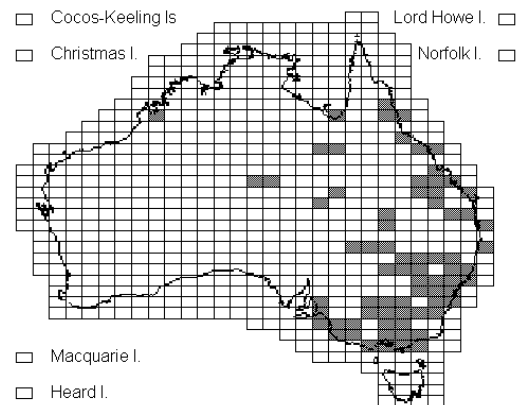
7 Past range and abundance

Thought to be endemic to Australia (Lane and Rogers, 2000), although one vagrant reached New Zealand (Marchant and Higgins, 1993). Irregularly recorded from wetlands throughout Australia, excluding Cape York Peninsula, but including Tasmania (Marchant and Higgins, 1993, Johnstone and Storr, 1998). Most records from the Murray-Darling drainage system (Lowe, 1963, Vestjens, 1977, Blakers *et al.*, 1984). Most breeding records also from south-east, but also Barkly Tablelands, north-eastern and south-eastern Queensland and Kimberley (Lowe, 1963, Leach *et al.*, 1987, Jaensch, 1989, 1994, A. Ey, L. Nielsen, D. Rogers).

8 Present range and abundance

Few recent records from south-western Australia, where once more common (Johnstone and Storr, 1998). Though range has remained stable in eastern and northern Australia, reporting rate in RAOU historical atlases 0.7% up until 1950s to around 0.08% by the 1980s. Since 1990, fewer than 100 records throughout Australia and only a handful from the core

of subspecies' original eastern Australian range. There are particularly few winter records from anywhere in the subspecies' range (Lane and Rogers, 2000, D. Rogers).



9 Ecology

The Australian subspecies of Painted Snipe inhabits shallow, vegetated, temporary or infrequently filled wetlands, sometimes where there are trees such as River Red Gum *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* or Poplar Box *E. populnea* or shrubs such as Lignum *Muehlenbeckia florulenta* or samphire (Vestjens, 1977, Leach *et al.*, 1987). Feeding at the water's edge and on mudflats, Painted Snipe take seeds and invertebrates, including insects, worms, molluscs and crustaceans. The polyandrous female lays 3-6 eggs, which are incubated by male, in a shallow scrape nest (Lowe, 1963, Marchant and Higgins, 1993).

10 Threats

Though sufficiently opportunistic to take advantage of floods, the subspecies has probably suffered primarily from either wetland drainage, or the diversion of water from rivers, which means that shallow wetlands never form. Major water resource developments in the northern Murray-Darling Basin from the 1960s-1990s coincided with a significant decline in number of observations (Lane and Rogers, 2000). Such developments are continuing as river flows are reduced for irrigation with little regard for the ecological consequences (Kingsford and Thomas, 1998, Kingsford, 2000). Drainage and clearance of wetland vegetation probably caused a decline on the Swan Coastal Plain. A decline in the Kimberley has been attributed to overgrazing (Johnstone and Storr, 1998) and, in Victoria, shallow freshwater swamps have been

largely eliminated since Europeans arrived (Corrick, 1981, 1982). Breeding success is apparently often poor, at least of those nests that are discovered (Leach *et al.*, 1987).

11 Information required

- 11.1 Develop survey and monitoring techniques.
- 11.2 Analyse historical records using frequency of occurrence on bird lists from freshwater wetlands (see technique of Franklin, 1999)
- 11.3 Develop greater understanding of movement patterns.
- 11.4 Identify principal breeding wetlands and wintering grounds.
- 11.5 Provide detailed information on habitat before, during and after use to determine characteristics required by Painted Snipe.

12 Recovery objectives

- 12.1 Determine and arrest causes of decline.
- 12.2 Develop appropriate guidelines for wetland management.

13 Actions completed or under way

- 13.1 A database of records is currently being constructed.

14 Management actions required

- 14.1 Protect and manage principal breeding wetlands and wintering grounds. As a precaution, identify and protect habitat used by Painted Snipe in the last 10 years.
- 14.2 Rehabilitate selected former breeding wetlands as part of Landcare.
- 14.3 Monitor abundance at a landscape scale using, initially, the Atlas of Australian birds.
- 14.4 If deemed necessary on the basis of monitoring, develop techniques for maintaining a captive population

15 Organisations responsible for conservation

Environment Australia, Environment ACT, New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory, South Australian Department of Environment and Heritage, Victorian Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Western Australian Department of Conservation.

16 Other organisations involved

Australasian Wader Study Group of Birds Australia, other bird-watching groups, Parks Victoria, traditional owners, pastoralists.

17 Staff and financial resources required for recovery to be carried out

<i>Staff resources required 2001-2005</i>	0.2	<i>Project Officer (monitoring techniques)¹</i>
	1.5	<i>Technical Officer (monitoring wetlands)¹</i>
	1.5	<i>Extension Officer (wetlands)¹</i>

Financial resources required 2001-2005

<i>Action</i>	<i>Conservation agencies</i>	<i>Other funding sources</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Analysis of historical records¹</i>	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$30,000
<i>Development of monitoring techniques¹</i>	\$30,000	\$0	\$30,000
<i>Identification and monitoring of breeding wetlands¹</i>	\$150,000	\$75,000	\$225,000
<i>Protection and management of breeding wetlands¹</i>	\$150,000	\$75,000	\$225,000
<i>Rehabilitation of selected former breeding wetlands¹</i>	\$30,000	\$120,000	\$150,000
<i>Assess need for captive breeding</i>	\$0	\$1,000	\$1,000
<i>Total</i>	\$375,000	\$286,000	\$661,000

¹ Costs shared among Australasian Bittern and Painted Snipe, also benefit near threatened wetland species

18 Bibliography

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Comments received from

John Blyth, Allan Burbidge, Colin Dollery, Roger Jaensch, Brett Lane, Danny Rogers.