

RECOVERY OUTLINE

Partridge Pigeon (western)

1	Family	Columbidae
2	Scientific name	<i>Geophaps smithii blaaui</i> Mathews, 1912
3	Common name	Partridge Pigeon (western)
4	Conservation status	Vulnerable: C2b

5 Reasons for listing

The few records of this subspecies indicate that the population is unlikely to exceed 5,000 mature individuals. They appear to occur in a single sub-population, for which there is evidence of decline (Vulnerable: C2b).

	Estimate	Reliability
Extent of occurrence	30,000 km ²	high
trend	stable	medium
Area of occupancy	1,000 km ²	low
trend	decreasing	medium
No. of breeding birds	5,000	low
trend	decreasing	medium
No. of sub-populations	1	high
Generation time	5 years	low

6 Intraspecific taxa

G. s. smithii (northern Northern Territory) is Near Threatened, which is also the global status of the species.

7 Past range and abundance

Recorded in remote areas within 100 km of the coast in the west and north-west of the Kimberley region, northern Western Australia (Storr, 1980, Johnstone, 1981, Blakers *et al.*, 1984). The subspecies was generally seen in pairs or flocks of up to 20 (Johnstone and Storr, 1998). Reported as very numerous west of Durack R. (House, 1902) and at Kalumburu (Hill, 1911).

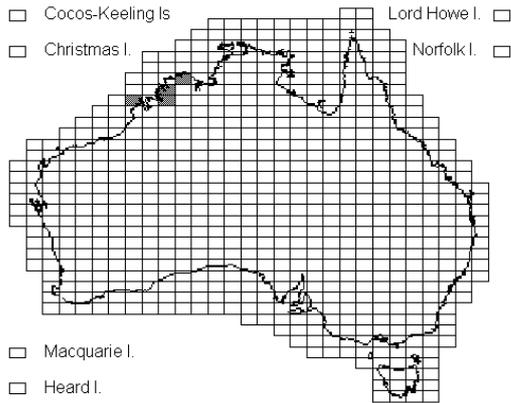
8 Present range and abundance

Since 1977, recorded in only four of the six degree squares in which it was recorded historically (Franklin, 1999). At Kalumburu, only one pair was found in searches during 1999 (T. Vigilante), and recorded fairly regularly on the Mitchell Plateau (G. Graham).

9 Ecology

The western subspecies of Partridge Pigeon occurs primarily in open woodland, particularly on the ecotone between the rugged King Leopold Sandstones and alluvial flats. The ground cover is mostly tall grasses, though the pigeons are usually seen feeding in recently burnt areas, by roads and on short grass (Johnstone, 1981, C. Done). This suggests that the patchiness of the habitat may be important (A. H. Burbidge). The nests are made on the ground,

most often at the base of a clump of grass (Frith, 1982). The species generally lays two eggs (Frith, 1982, Higgins and Davies, 1996).



10 Threats

The ecological requirements of this subspecies are likely to resemble those of the eastern subspecies, for which a tight temporal and spatial mosaic of burning as practised traditionally by Aboriginal people is probably essential. However, the fire regime has at least partly shifted to one of predominantly late dry season fires that promote invasion by annual sorghum, a trend that is likely to continue (J. Russell-Smith). Feral cattle and pigs have been present in the area for some time, but there is no evidence of them having any adverse effect on the pigeon (R. Johnstone).

11 Information required

- 11.1 Determine effects of sorghum invasion on pigeon behaviour and abundance.
- 11.2 Develop robust monitoring techniques.

12 Recovery objectives

- 12.1 Stabilise population as assessed by monitoring.
- 12.2 If decline in abundance confirmed, reverse it.

13 Actions completed or under way

None.

14 Management actions required

- 14.1 Tighter mosaic burning over entire range of species.

14.2 Monitor abundance in selected accessible parts of distribution, possibly through Birds Australia Atlas scheme.

15 Organisations responsible for conservation

Western Australian Department of Conservation.

16 Other organisations involved

Kimberley Land Council and other indigenous groups, traditional owners, Western Australian Fire Service, Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Development of Tropical Savannas.

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

Staff resources required 2001-2005

0.2

Project Officer

Financial resources required 2001-2005

Action	Conservation agencies	Other funding sources	Total
Investigate relationship between sorghum and pigeon abundance	\$0	\$30,000	\$30,000
Develop monitoring techniques	\$1,500	\$5,000	\$6,500
Instigate more widespread mosaic burning ¹	\$1,000	\$0	\$1,000
Monitor pigeon abundance	\$5,000	\$15,000	\$20,000
Total	\$7,500	\$50,000	\$57,500

¹ Costs for planning relating to pigeons, other costs part of routine conservation management for overall biodiversity.

18 Bibliography

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Comments received from

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