

TAXON SUMMARY

Princess Parrot

1	Family	Psittacidae
2	Scientific name	<i>Polytelis alexandrae</i> Gould, 1863
3	Common name	Princess Parrot
4	Conservation status	Near Threatened: c

5 Reasons for listing

Although this species has always been scarce, an apparent reduction in sighting frequency in the eastern part of its range since the 19th century suggests that there has been a decline in density over 50% of its range (Near Threatened: c).

	Estimate	Reliability
Extent of occurrence	2,000,000 km ²	medium
trend	fluctuating	medium
Area of occupancy	10,000 km ²	low
trend	fluctuating	medium
No. of breeding birds	5,000	low
trend	fluctuating	medium
No. of sub-populations	1	low
Generation time	5 years	low

6 Intraspecific taxa

None described.

7 Past range and abundance

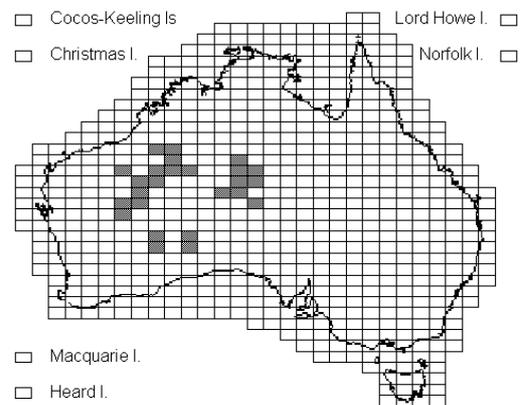
Irregularly present through much of the central and western arid zone (Carter, 1993, Blyth and Burbidge, 1997, Higgins, 1999). At most sites, species appears at intervals of more than 20 years, but seen regularly around Lake Tobin, W. A., in north-east Great Sandy Desert during 1990s. This is currently considered a core area, from which birds are thought to move to central highlands during droughts at Lake Tobin (Carter, 1993, Blyth and Burbidge, 1997). The Great Victoria Desert might contain a second core area (Blyth and Burbidge, 1997). Early records refer to large numbers of breeding birds, particularly in northern South Australia (Higgins, 1999).

8 Present range and abundance

Large-scale movements and sporadic appearance of species outside western deserts presents difficulties for determining whether there has been any change in distribution (Blyth and Burbidge, 1997). However, records from periphery of range, in south-west and north-west Western Australia, northern Northern Territory and northern South Australia, have declined since the 1950s, suggesting a contraction in range. Except near Lake Tobin, all recent records have been of small parties.

9 Ecology

Princess Parrots are usually seen in swales between sand dunes, where they feed on a variety of seeds, as well as flowers, fruits and foliage of shrubs and trees. Nests have been recorded in hollows in River Red Gum *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* and Desert Oak *Allocasuarina decasneana* with clutch sizes of three to six (Higgins, 1999).



10 Threats

Despite being found in such remote areas, the Princess Parrot may be adversely affected by the same habitat changes that led to the extinction of many central Australian mammals over the 20th century (Burbidge and McKenzie, 1989). Throughout the subspecies' range, habitat may have been degraded and food availability reduced by an altered fire regime with a coarser mosaic of fire history, and the introduction of herbivores (sheep, rabbits and camels).

11 Recommended actions

- 11.1 Study ecology of species near Lake Tobin to determine likely constraints on population size.
- 11.2 Follow up sightings away from Lake Tobin to characterise habitat and model habitat requirements and response to fire history and rainfall from across species range, possibly using measures of relative greenness available from LANDSAT.
- 11.3 Incorporate findings into relevant management.

12 Bibliography

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Text adapted from

Fleming (1992).

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