

TAXON SUMMARY

Spinifex Pigeon (eastern)

1	Family	Columbidae
2	Scientific name	<i>Geophaps plumifera leucogaster</i> (Gould, 1867)
3	Common name	Spinifex Pigeon (eastern)
4	Conservation status	Near Threatened: c

5 Reasons for listing

The subspecies has disappeared from the southern part of its former range and occurs at a lower density in north (Near Threatened: c), but is still too numerous and widespread to be considered Vulnerable.

	Estimate	Reliability
Extent of occurrence	1,800,000 km ²	high
trend	decreasing	low
Area of occupancy	5,000 km ²	low
trend	decreasing	low
No. of breeding birds	20,000	low
trend	decreasing	low
No. of sub-populations	4	medium
Largest sub-population	10,000	low

6 Intraspecific taxa

G. p. plumifera (northern Northern Territory and north-western Australia) and *G. p. ferruginea* (Pilbara and southern Kimberley) are both Least Concern, as is the species as a whole.

7 Past range and abundance

Recorded patchily over northern Flinders Ra., Musgrave Ra., McDonnell Ra., east to Lake Eyre Basin and north to Barkly Tablelands/Mt Isa uplands and Gulf of Carpentaria (between Roper R. and Norman R.). Apparently isolated sub-population in upper reaches of Gilbert R (Blakers *et al.*, 1984, Higgins and Davies, 1996, Schodde and Mason, 1997). Breeding probably throughout range.

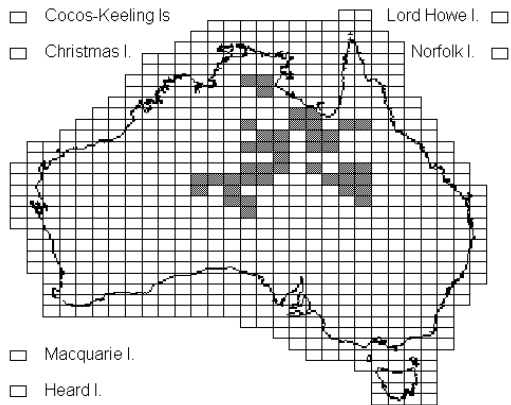
8 Present range and abundance

As above, with apparent range contractions and declines in abundance in arid Australia (Reid and Fleming, 1992). No longer found at type locality east of Maree, S. A., (McGilp, 1935) or in south-west Queensland (Reid and Fleming, 1992). Also scarce in Musgrave Ra., S. A. (McGilp 1935, Close and Jaensch, 1984, Schodde and Mason, 1997) and there has been a decrease in overall recording frequency in north-eastern Australia (D. Franklin).

9 Ecology

Spinifex Pigeons are found on stony ground, in ranges, escarpments, rocky outcrops and gibber plains that are sparsely vegetated, often, but not always by spinifex *Triodia* (Higgins and Davies, 1996). They build nests

on the ground in which to lay two eggs, sheltered by low vegetation or rocks (Higgins and Davies, 1996). They forage for seeds on bare ground (Frith and Barker, 1975).



10 Threats

Disappearance of the Spinifex Pigeon from southern parts of its range indicate that it may be sensitive to overgrazing (Frith, 1982), particularly by sheep (McGilp, 1935), although fox predation or a change in fire regime are equally likely causes of decline.

11 Recommended actions

- 11.1 Determine relationship between abundance and grazing pressure, fox density and fire history.
- 11.2 Monitor abundance using bird atlas data, particularly at edges of the range, to determine long-term trends.

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Comments received from

Graham Carpenter, Peter Copley, Don Franklin, Ken Johnson,
Lynn Pedler, Adrian Stokes.