

TAXON SUMMARY

Square-tailed Kite

1	Family	Accipitridae
2	Scientific name	<i>Lophoictinia isura</i> (Gould, 1838)
3	Common name	Square-tailed Kite
4	Conservation status	Least Concern

5 Reasons for listing

Though the total population of this species is unlikely to exceed 10,000 mature individuals, it is possible that declines at the fringes of the range are offset by apparent increases elsewhere. Even if a decline were to be demonstrated, the species would not be Vulnerable (C), because a 10% decrease in population size over three generations is considered unlikely (so not C1), sub-populations in eastern and western Australia are thought to be separated (so not C2b), and both sub-populations probably exceed 1,000 individuals (so not C2a).

	Estimate	Reliability
Extent of occurrence	5,000,000 km ²	high
trend	stable	high
Area of occupancy	1,000 km ²	low
trend	stable	low
No. of breeding birds	7,000	low
trend	stable	low
No. of sub-populations	2	medium
Largest sub-population	4,500	low
Generation time	10 years	low

6 Intraspecific taxa

None described. The Square-tailed Kite is an endemic species in a monotypic genus.

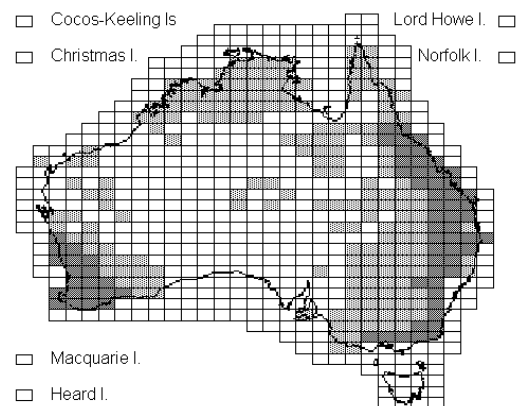
7 Past range and abundance

Found throughout Australian mainland, primarily within 250 km of the coast and rarely inland along wooded watercourses and in central Australia (Blakers *et al.*, 1984, Debus and Czechura, 1989). Breeding in south-western Australia and in wetter parts of southern and eastern Australia, as far north as 18°S, with birds from southern Australia probably overwintering in the tropics (Debus, 1983, Blakers *et al.*, 1984, Debus and Silveira, 1989, Debus, 1991, Marchant and Higgins, 1993, Borella and Borella, 1997, Johnstone and Storr, 1998). There are no breeding records from the Northern Territory or the Kimberley (Marchant and Higgins, 1993). Elsewhere, movements probably more restricted (Debus, 1991, Debus and Czechura, 1989).

8 Present range and abundance

As above. Only documented evidence of decline is from the edge of range in South Australia, where no

recent evidence of breeding. Population size in South Australia estimated at fewer than ten individuals (Debus, 1991) and that in Victoria at 20-50 pairs (Debus and Silveira 1989), though seen more frequently in western Victoria in recent years (G. Pizzey). Numbers in southern Queensland possibly increasing, particularly since mid-1970s (G. Czechura, R. Hobson).



9 Ecology

The Square-tailed Kite is a specialised predator of the canopy, taking small birds and their eggs and nestlings as well as insects (Barnes *et al.*, 1999). It hunts primarily over open forest, woodlands and mallee communities that are rich in passerines, as well as over adjacent heaths and other low scrubby habitats and in wooded towns (Storr, 1980, Debus and Czechura, 1989). It appears to prefer a landscape that is structurally diverse (G. Czechura, A. H. Burbidge).

10 Threats

Much of the native vegetation in the south and east of the species' range has been cleared for agriculture (Debus and Czechura, 1989, Olsen, 1998). While this is still considered to be the major threat, in places, the species may have benefited from partial clearance (G. Czechura). Illegal egg-collecting and shooting constitute threats at the distribution's margins (Jolly, 1989). An apparently low recruitment rate means that recovery from any losses is likely to be slow (Debus and Czechura, 1989, Jolly, 1989). However, there is little evidence of a decline, and anecdotal reports of the reverse. There is also an assured supply of passerines in those places where it hunts around towns (e. g. Queensland; Debus and Czechura, 1989), and it

can tolerate routine human activity, when nesting (Bischoff *et al.*, 2000).

11 Recommended actions

- 11.1 Document basic life history data on breeding, foraging range, diet etc.
- 11.2 Develop methods for assessing population trends.
- 11.3 Monitor long-term trends in abundance at two sites in south-eastern Australia and one in south-western Australia.

12 Bibliography

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Comments received from

Tom Aumann, David Baker-Gabb, Allan Burbidge, Andrew Burbidge, Greg Czechura, Stephen Debus, Rod Hobson, Penny Olsen, Graham Pizzey.