

RECOVERY OUTLINE

Star Finch (southern)

1	Family	Ploceidae
2	Scientific name	<i>Neochmia ruficauda ruficauda</i> (Gould, 1837)
3	Common name	Star Finch (southern)
4	Conservation status	Critically Endangered: C2a, D

5 Reasons for listing

On the basis of recent sightings, the population of this subspecies is thought to contain fewer than 50 mature individuals (Critically Endangered: D). It is probably also declining and fragmented (C2a).

	Estimate	Reliability
Extent of occurrence	300,000 km ²	low
trend	decreasing	low
Area of occupancy	20 km ²	low
trend	decreasing	low
No. of breeding birds	50	low
trend	decreasing	low
No. of sub-populations	4	low
Largest sub-population	20	low
Generation time	2 years	low

6 Intraspecific taxa

N. r. clarescens (Cape York Peninsula) is Endangered.
N. r. subclarescens (north Western Australia and Northern Territory) is Near Threatened.

7 Past range and abundance

Eastern Australia from the Namoi Valley, N. S. W., (Gould, 1865) to the Burdekin-Lynd, Qld, where it intergrades with *N. r. clarescens* (Schodde and Mason, 1999). Historical records as far west as Blackall and as far north as Cardwell (Holmes, 1986). Possibly never common. From 1835 to 1990, 25 records accepted unequivocally, seven other records were possibly of hybrids with one of the northern subspecies or escapees. Most records from Rockhampton area, with two from the Connors R. (Holmes, 1996, 1998, I. McAllan).

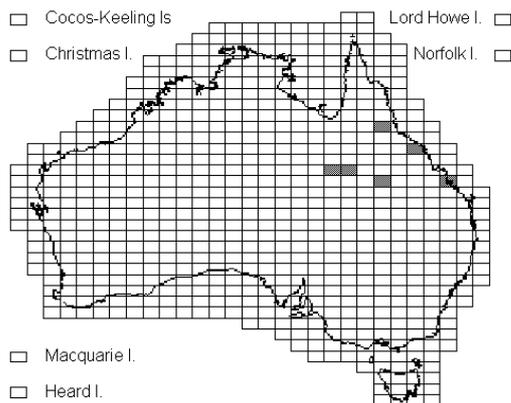
8 Present range and abundance

Four definite and six unconfirmed records since 1990, scattered across central Queensland with no two records from the one place (Holmes, 1996, 1998). The largest group was 15-20 birds in Aramac in 1994 (Holmes, 1996).

9 Ecology

Star Finches are considered to be largely sedentary inhabitants of grasslands or grassy woodland near water (Gould 1865, Holmes, 1996, 1998), although the three most recent sightings have been in cleared, or even suburban, settings that have very few remnant trees. The finches build domed nests in patches of

rank grass, reeds or low in trees, usually near water (Holmes, 1998).



10 Threats

The southern subspecies of Star Finch disappeared from much of its range before the process of decline could be described (Holmes, 1996, 1998, Franklin, 1999). However, the riparian habitat it occupied would have been highly vulnerable to over-grazing and trampling, particularly during drought. Remaining sub-populations presumably persist in fragments of suitable habitat that have chanced to escape damage at critical times (Garnett, 1992). Despite recent sightings and the finch's largely sedentary behaviour, permanently occupied habitat has not been found. If birds are rediscovered, they may be threatened by trapping for aviculture. Large numbers were trapped in the past, although the subspecies is unlikely to have persisted in captivity (Holmes, 1998). Invasion of habitat by weeds (Garnett, 1992) and cyanide in mining tailings dams (Holmes, 1998) may also be local threats.

11 Information required

11.1 Understand the requirements of the species.

12 Recovery objectives

12.1 To locate regularly occupied habitat and initiate conservation management to ensure its persistence.

13 Actions completed or under way

13.1 An extensive survey of habitat and literature was undertaken in 1993-1994 (Holmes, 1996).

- 14 Management actions required
- 14.1 Rapid follow up of serendipitous sightings in an attempt to locate permanent habitat. Dedication of resources to initial searching, however, is not warranted.
- 14.2 Once habitat has been located, work with the land owner to maintain its conservation values.

14.3 Once wild sub-population found, establish captive population.

15 Organisations responsible for conservation
Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service.

16 Other organisations involved
Queensland Ornithological Society, other bird-watching societies, land-holders.

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

Staff resources required 2001-2005

None

Financial resources required 2001-2005

Action	Conservation agencies	Other funding sources	Total
Searching	\$0	\$20,000	\$20,000
Extension and conservation management ¹	\$25,000	\$0	\$25,000
Establish captive population ¹	\$2,000	\$25,000	\$27,000
Total	\$27,000	\$45,000	\$72,000

¹ Expenditure only if birds found

18 Bibliography

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