RECOVERY OUTLINE

Superb Parrot

1	Family	Psittacidae
2	Scientific name	*Polytelis swainsonii* (Demarest, 1826)
3	Common name	Superb Parrot
4	Conservation status	Vulnerable: C2b

5 Reasons for listing

The single sub-population of this species is thought to contain about 6,500 mature individuals and to be declining (Vulnerable: C2b).

	Estimate	*Reliability*
Extent of occurrence	*81,000 km²*	*high*
trend	*stable*	*medium*
Area of occupancy	*1,000 km²*	*low*
trend	*stable*	*medium*
No. of breeding birds	*6,500*	*low*
trend	*decreasing*	*low*
No. of sub-populations	*1*	*medium*
Generation time	*5 years*	*low*

6 Infraspecific taxa

None described.

7 Past range and abundance

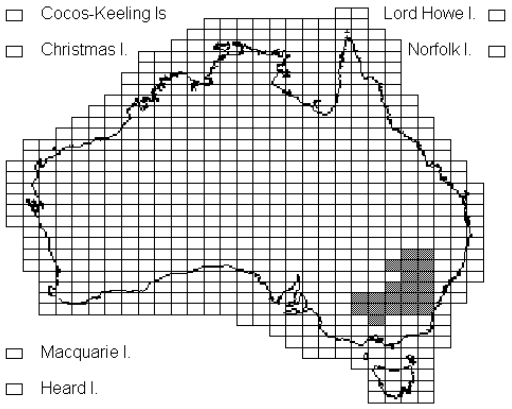
Melbourne, Vic. to north-central New South Wales, mostly on the inland slopes of the Great Dividing Ra. (Higgins, 1999). Breeding largely confined to south of 33°S. On fledging, most birds leave nesting areas and many parrots move to northern New South Wales for the winter (Webster, 1988).

8 Present range and abundance

In Victoria, now largely confined to Barmah Forest area. It is rarely seen around Wangaratta (Higgins, 1999) and disappeared from central and southern regions in early 1900s, and from north by 1930 (Webster and Ahern, 1992). Currently about 50 nests known from Victoria (Webster, 1998) with up to 410 birds seen at Nathalia (M. Fendley). Eight nests have been located in the Australian Capital Territory (Davey, 1997) and numbers estimated at 50-100 birds (Webster, 1998). In New South Wales, declined in the Parkes district since 1960s, and absent from along the Murray R. between Tocumwal and Yarrawonga, but may have extended range to Deniliquin and in northern New South Wales over same period (Schrader, 1980, Higgins, 1999). Over the last decade, 133 nests have been found in southern New South Wales (Webster, 1998) with counts on Gulpa I./Mellewa State Forest ranging from 35 to 150 individuals (1997-1999; R. Webster) and in Wagga Wagga from 30-100 (1997-1998; B. Mullins). Estimates of 1,000 birds in the Goolgowi District, several thousand birds along Murrumbidgee R., 200-400 along Edward R. and several thousand birds on the south-west slopes (Webster, 1998, 1998). Estimated at fewer than breeding 5,000 pairs (Davidson and Chamber, 1992) and 5,000-8,000 individuals. Numbers may be higher now than the 1940s, but trends in habitat suggest a decline likely (Webster, 1998).

9 Ecology

In the Riverina, Superb Parrots nest in loose colonies in riparian woodland of River Red Gum *Eucalyptus camaldulensis.* They forage in box woodland, particularly that dominated by Yellow Box *E. melliodora*, and feed on seeds of herbaceous plants. On the inland slopes, Superb Parrots both forage and breed within box woodland, mostly nesting in dead trees (Webster, 1988). Here, where suitable nesting trees are widely dispersed, they forage up to 15 km from the nest. In, winter they move into box, box-pine *Callitris*, and Boree *Acacia pendula* woodlands to feed on lerp, mistletoe berries, eucalypt flowers and grass seed (Webster, 1998). Spilt grain is also taken (Webster, 1988, Higgins, 1999). While they use woodland remnants as corridors, they rarely cross extensive open ground (Webster, 1988, Davidson and Chamber, 1992, Webster and Ahern, 1992, Higgins, 1999).



10 Threats

The contraction of the Superb Parrot's range has largely resulted from clearance for agriculture (Higgins, 1999), but even in the absence of further clearance, the species faces significant threats. Both foraging areas and nest sites may be scarce. Remnant habitat is often fragmented, with feeding habitat separated from breeding habitat (Webster, 1988). Much of it is also degraded, with regeneration of nest trees prevented by

overgrazing by stock and rabbits, and by inappropriate fire regimes (Webster and Ahern, 1992). Live nest trees are threatened by logging, particularly on private land, and artificially high water levels as a result of irrigation. Dead nest trees may not be replaced when they fall or are cut for firewood. With a dearth of potential nest sites, competition with other species, particularly the Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, may become limiting. Irrigation, causing high water tables, drainage schemes and salinisation, is also degrading non-breeding habitat (Webster, 1998). Illegal trapping occurs, and may be the principal source of birds for the captive trade (Webster, 1998), but constitutes a less significant threat than habitat loss (Webster and Ahern, 1992). Substantial numbers of birds are killed on roadsides, particularly during periods when grain is being transported. Pesticide poisoning may also be a problem (Webster and Ahern, 1992).

11 Information required

11.1 Refine monitoring techniques.

12 Recovery objectives

12.1 Stabilise existing population.

12.2 Secure numbers on western slopes.

13 Actions completed or under way

13.1 Initial surveys have been undertaken throughout distribution (Webster, 1988).

13.2 A pilot study of mapping of nest trees is being undertaken near Yass, N. S. W.

13.3 Essential landscape features (eg. availability of food, level of connectivity between habitat blocks) are being characterised

13.4 Guidelines have been developed for forestry in riparian breeding habitat.

13.5 Birds in northern Vic. and along Murrumbidgee R. and Edward R. are censused regularly.

13.6 Remnant habitat is being protected and new habitat re-established.

13.7 A campaign to reduce road kills is being implemented on the inland slopes of N. S. W.

14 Management actions required

14.1 Survey birds at northern edge of breeding range.

14.2 Extend pilot survey of nest trees to wider geographical area.

14.3 Extend campaign to reduce roadside deaths to other parts of range.

14.4 Protect all woodland regularly used by Superb Parrots from clearing, monitoring compliance biennially.

14.5 Place all Superb Parrot sites on public land under secure conservation management, particularly those on timber reserves, transport corridors and local government land.

14.6 Within the parrot's range manage at least 15% of the pre-European area of all woodland communities on public or private land for nature conservation, using incentives where necessary.

14.7 Using appropriate incentives, undertake extension with land-holders that have suitable woodland habitat to promote sound management of remnants and encourage greater connectivity between sub-populations.

14.8 Promote revegetation and land reclamation that recreates woodland habitat with a full complement of biodiversity, including the parrot.

14.9 Control and reduce firewood collection from areas used by Superb Parrots, promoting wood-lot development close to markets, and reduce grazing densities, where appropriate.

14.10 Determine extent of wildlife trade and possible impacts on population viability, roadside management and control of nest competitors.

14.11 Establish voluntary operation groups at Young-Boorowa-Cootamundra, Yass-Canberra, Leeton-Darlington Point, Wagga Wagga, Deniliquin areas and Barmah Forest areas and a Recovery Team.

15 Organisations responsible for conservation of species

Environment ACT, New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service, Victorian Department of Natural Resources and Environment.

16 Other organisations involved

Birds Australia, Landcare groups, Greening Australia, local government, native title holders, New South Wales Department of Land and Water Conservation, State Forests of New South Wales, Nathalia Tree Group, Rural Land Protection Boards, Department of Water Resources, Murray Darling Basin Commission, Western Riverina Vegetation Inc., Road Transport Authority, Parks Victoria, Victorian Department of Infrastructure, bird-watching societies.

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

Staff resources required 2001-2005 *0.2* *Extension Officer*

Financial resources required 2001-2005

Action	*Conservation agencies*	*Other funding sources*	*Total*
Surveys and monitoring	$20,000	$50,000	$70,000
Wildlife management	$40,000	$20,000	$60,000
Campaign to reduce roadside losses	$10,000	$15,000	$25,000
Extension and landscape management [1]	$60,000	$100,000	$160,000
Appropriate management of public lands [1]	$125,000	$250,000	$375,000
Development of operations groups and recovery team	$50,000	$150,000	$200,000
Total	$305,000	$585,000	**$890,000**

1 Costs divided among all threatened bird taxa from south-east woodlands; in addition to those being expended as a part of other programs.

18 Bibliography

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