

TAXON SUMMARY

White-browed Babbler (western wheatbelt)

1	Family	Pomatostomidae
2	Scientific name	<i>Pomatostomus superciliosus ashbyi</i> Mathews, 1911
3	Common name	White-browed Babbler (western wheatbelt)
4	Conservation status	Near Threatened: a

5 Reasons for listing

Over half the subspecies' habitat has been cleared (Near Threatened: a). Continuing declines are inevitable, even though the subspecies is still widespread and is more persistent in fragments than other wheatbelt taxa.

	Estimate	Reliability
Extent of occurrence	140,000 km ²	medium
trend	stable	high
Area of occupancy	14,000 km ²	low
trend	decreasing	medium
No. of breeding birds	30,000	low
trend	decreasing	medium
No. of sub-populations	50	low
Largest sub-population	15,000	low
Generation time	5 years	low

6 Intraspecific taxa

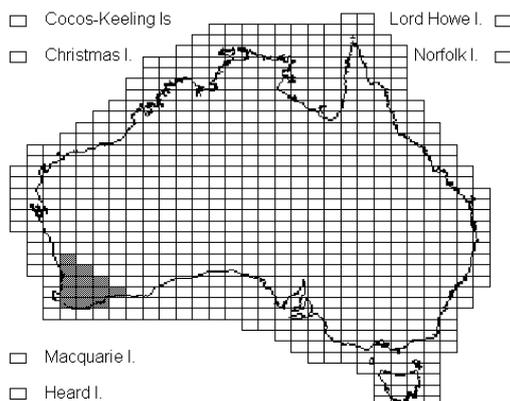
P. s. gilgandra (south-eastern mainland Australia on the inland slopes of the Great Dividing Ra.) and *P. s. superciliosus* (central and southern arid zone and eastern mallee) are Least Concern, as is the species.

7 Past range and abundance

South-western Western Australia, but not in or west of the Darling Ra. Intergrades with *P. s. superciliosus* between Dongara-Geraldton and Hopetoun-Esperance (Schodde and Mason, 1999).

8 Present range and abundance

As above, but with much reduced area of occupancy (Saunders and Ingram, 1995).



9 Ecology

The western wheatbelt subspecies of the White-browed Babbler lives in eucalypt forests and woodlands, and forages on and near the ground for insects and seeds. Bulky domed nests are used for both breeding and roosting, the usual clutch size being 2-3 (Blakers *et al.*, 1984, Saunders and Ingram, 1995).

10 Threats

Clearance for agriculture has removed most of the White-browed Babbler's habitat in the wheatbelt of Western Australia (Saunders and Ingram, 1995). Although the subspecies persists in the continuous habitat that surrounds the wheatbelt (Blakers *et al.*, 1984), and it has proved more resilient than many birds to degradation of habitat fragments by stock and weeds (Saunders and Ingram, 1995), the species shows an aversion to induced edges (Luck *et al.*, 1999). On the basis of experience of the species in fragmented habitats in eastern Australia (Reid, 1999), declines and regional extinctions seem inevitable in all but the largest patches.

11 Recommended actions

- 11.1 Protect all woodland in which the subspecies is known to be resident from clearing, monitoring compliance biennially.
- 11.2 Place all White-browed Babbler sub-populations on public land under secure conservation management, particularly those in timber reserves, transport corridors and local government land.
- 11.3 Within the babbler'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.
- 11.4 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.
- 11.5 Promote revegetation and land reclamation that recreates woodland habitat with a full

complement of biodiversity, including the babbler.

- 11.6 Control and reduce firewood collection from areas occupied by White-browed Babblers, promoting wood-lot development close to markets, and reduce grazing densities where necessary.
- 11.7 Investigate the feasibility of reintroduction to large remnants, possibly with the assistance of private aviculturists.
- 11.8 Undertake long-term monitoring of remnant sub-populations.

12 Bibliography

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Saunders, D. A. and Ingram, J. A. 1995. Birds of Southwestern Australia: An Atlas of Changes in the Distribution and Abundance of the Wheatbelt Avifauna. Surrey Beatty and Sons, Chipping Norton.

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