

RECOVERY OUTLINE

Western Bristlebird

1	Family	Pardalotidae
2	Scientific name	<i>Dasyornis longirostris</i> Gould, 1841
3	Common name	Western Bristlebird
4	Conservation status	Vulnerable: D2

5 Reasons for listing

This species is found at few locations, so is Vulnerable (D2). There is also an argument for listing it as Endangered. The six sub-populations occur over an area of about 200 km² (B1), and a single fire could cause a decrease in area of occupancy (B2b), quality of habitat (c), number of sub-populations (d) and number of mature individuals (e). Vulnerability to fire could also reduce the fragmented population of about 2,000 (C2a). However, the history of fires within this subspecies' range over the last 30 years, and the effort being made to prevent fire and its spread, indicate that habitat from one fire will often recover before another large area is burnt, allowing recovery of the population. Assuming they are of limited extent, fires should only cause a temporary decline, and can be considered part of the natural variation. Status after a fire, however, would need immediate reassessment.

	Estimate	Reliability
Extent of occurrence	600 km ²	medium
trend	stable	medium
Area of occupancy	20 km ²	low
trend	stable	medium
No. of breeding birds	2,000	low
trend	stable	medium
No. of sub-populations	6	medium
Largest sub-population	1,000	low
Generation time	5 years	low

6 Intraspecific taxa

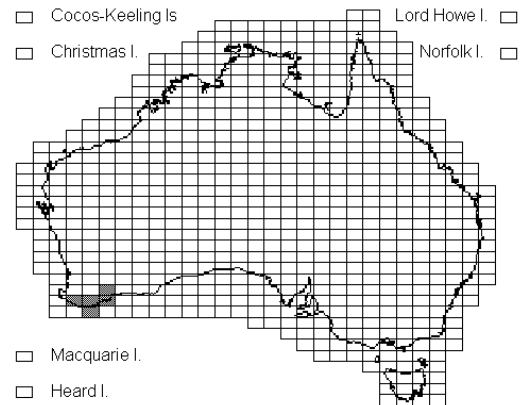
None described.

7 Past range and abundance

Coastal, Perth district to Augusta, Albany and eastern end of Fitzgerald River National Park, W. A. (Whittell, 1951, Whitley, 1971, Smith and Moore, 1977, Smith, 1987, Baird, 1991, Cale and Burbidge, 1993).

8 Present range and abundance

East of Albany, W. A., between Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve and east of Waychincup R., and from five locations in the Fitzgerald River National Park (McNee, 1986, Smith, 1987, Chapman and Newbey, 1990, S. McNee, B. Newbey). In spring 1999, eight birds were translocated from Two Peoples Bay to near Walpole, west of Albany, and some were persisting at the site in March 2000 (A. H. Burbidge).



9 Ecology

The Western Bristlebird is terrestrial and sedentary, with a preference for dense low heaths. In Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve, it lives in dense closed heath 1-1.5 m high. Near Waychincup R. and in the Fitzgerald R. National Park, the main habitat is closed heath 0.5-1 m high, sometimes with scattered patches of mallee eucalypts, though more open heaths may be used if there are enough patches of dense shrubs in the area (McNee, 1986). Territory size is estimated to be 7 ha, and territories may remain unchanged for at least 30 years (Smith, 1987, A. H. Burbidge). In Fitzgerald River National Park, sub-populations appear to have survived fire where patches of habitat remained unburnt. After fires, unburnt swampy vegetation, predominantly sedges and thickets, may be important as refugia (Smith, 1987, S. McNee). However, recovery less likely following extensive fires that leave no unburnt refugia, or when successive fires affect a sub-population (A. H. Burbidge, B. Newbey). At Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve, heaths are reoccupied 3-5 years after fire, though breeding does not begin immediately. Heaths in drier areas may not be reoccupied until 11-14 years after fire (Smith, 1987). The species was found in heaths 5-12 years after fire in the area between Boulder Hill and east of Waychincup R., and 14-28 years after fire in the northern part of Fitzgerald River National Park (McNee, 1986).

10 Threats

The Western Bristlebird is particularly vulnerable to habitat destruction or alteration. Fire is the main threat, with fires at less than 5-10 year intervals leading to local extinction (Smith, 1987). Local extinctions

following fire and are almost certainly the main cause of the range contraction. At the other end of the scale, coastal heath (at least at Two Peoples Bay) remains suitable habitat for at least 50 years after fire, though carrying capacity may be reduced with time (Smith, 1987). In the past, clearance has affected the species, but this is no longer a threat.

11 Information required

None.

12 Recovery objectives

- 12.1 Maintain all existing sub-populations.
- 12.2 Re-establish sub-populations where appropriate habitat persists in former range.

13 Actions completed or under way

- 13.1 All sub-populations have been surveyed and the modern distribution of the species established.
- 13.2 Sub-populations, particularly those at Two Peoples Bay, are protected from fire.

13.3 Birds are being translocated to apparently suitable habitat west of Albany.

13.4 Recovery of this and other threatened bird taxa from the south coast is being managed by the South Coast Threatened Bird Recovery Team.

14 Management actions required

- 14.1 Improve fire suppression capabilities at remote sites.
- 14.2 Review status immediately after any fire.
- 14.3 Survey and monitor population every 5 years.

15 Organisations responsible for conservation

Western Australian Department of Conservation and Land Management.

16 Other organisations involved

South Coast Threatened Birds Recovery Team, Environment Australia, City of Albany, bird-watching societies.

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

Staff resources required 2001-2005 1.0 Technical Officer¹

Financial resources required 2001-2005

Action	Conservation agencies	Other funding sources	Total
Maintain fire protection at all sites ¹	\$50,000	\$25,000	\$75,000
Survey and monitor population at 5 year intervals ¹	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$100,000
Translocate birds to west of Albany	\$100,000	\$20,000	\$120,000
Total	\$200,000	\$95,000	\$295,000

¹ Cost spread among all threatened taxa at Two Peoples Bay / Mt Manypeaks

18 Bibliography

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Text adapted from

McNee (1992).

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