

Approved Conservation Advice
(s266B of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*)

Approved Conservation Advice for
***Geophaps smithii blaauwi* (Partridge Pigeon (western))**

This Conservation Advice has been developed based on the best available information at the time this conservation advice was approved.

Description

Geophaps smithii blaauwi, Family Columbidae, also known as the Partridge Pigeon (western), is a medium-sized (24–29 cm long), ground-dwelling pigeon. Adults of both sexes are mostly olive-brown or grey-brown with black and white facial markings, a large area of yellow skin around the eye, iridescent green (in males) or purple (in females) patches on the wings, a purplish-brown or purplish-grey lower breast, white flanks and a white belly. The Partridge Pigeon (western) mostly feeds on seeds but also takes some insects and small snails (Johnstone & Storr, 1998).

The two identified subspecies differ in their iris and facial skin colour: the iris of *G. s. blaauwi* can be either brown, or grey to white grey, the facial skin is yellow. The iris of *G. s. smithii* can be either white to pale grey, pale green or pale yellow whilst the facial skin can be pink red to orange red (Higgins & Davies, 1996).

Conservation Status

The Partridge Pigeon (western) is listed as **vulnerable**. This species is eligible for listing as vulnerable under *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cwlth) (EPBC Act) as, prior to the commencement of the EPBC Act, it was listed as vulnerable under Schedule 1 of the *Endangered Species Protection Act 1992* (Cwlth).

Distribution and Habitat

The Partridge Pigeon (western) occurs in remote locations of the Kimberley region in northern Western Australia. The listing of this subspecies is related to presumed decline, small population size and limited range. The subspecies has been recorded from Yampi Peninsula north to Napier Broome Bay and inland to the lower Isdell River, middle Charnley River, Wulumara Creek, Mitchell Plateau and lower Drysdale River. The subspecies is typically recorded in low woodlands, tall shrublands and tall open shrublands that support relatively short, open grasses (Johnstone & Storr, 1998). The subspecies occurs within the Rangelands (Western Australia) Natural Resource Management Region.

The distribution of this subspecies is not known to overlap with any EPBC Act-listed threatened ecological communities.

Threats

The potential threats to the Partridge Pigeon (western) include degradation of habitat by changes in fire regime, grazing and trampling by feral animals (particularly cattle (*Bos taurus*), donkeys (*Equus asinus*) and pigs (*Sus scrofa*)), invasive plants, clearing, and processes that reduce the availability of permanent waterholes in the Kimberley region.

Predation by feral cats (*Felis catus*) and Dingoes (*Canis lupis dingo*) also represent a threat (Garnett & Crowley, 2000; Woinarski, 2005).

Regional and Local Priority Actions

The following priority recovery and threat abatement actions can be done to support the recovery of the Partridge Pigeon (western).

Habitat Loss, Disturbance and Modification

- Monitor known populations to identify key threats.
- Monitor the progress of recovery, including the effectiveness of management actions and the need to adapt them if necessary.
- Manage any changes to hydrology which may result in changes to the water table levels, increased run-off, sedimentation or pollution.
- Manage any disruptions to water flows.
- Investigate formal conservation arrangements such as the use of covenants, conservation agreements or inclusion in reserve tenure.
- Develop and initiate a management plan where this species occurs on pastoral lands.

Invasive Weeds

- Develop and implement guidelines, policy and procedures that limit the spread of invasive exotic grasses.
- Identify and remove weeds in the local area, which could become a threat to the Partridge Pigeon (western), using appropriate methods.

Animal Predation or Competition

- Control populations of introduced herbivores (donkeys, cattle, pigs and others) to such a level that they have no significant impact on the habitat quality of this subspecies.
- Implement appropriate management actions recommended in the *Threat Abatement Plan for Predation by Feral Cats* (EA, 1999) and *Threat Abatement Plan for Predation, Habitat Degradation, Competition and Disease Transmission by Feral Pigs* (DEH, 2005).

Fire

- Develop and implement a suitable fire management strategy for the Partridge Pigeon (western). Studies of the eastern subspecies (*Geophaps smithii smithii*) suggest that the Partridge Pigeon (western) is likely to require a tight temporal and spatial mosaic of burning as traditionally practised by Indigenous communities.

Conservation Information

- Raise awareness of the Partridge Pigeon (western) within the local community, specifically among land managers.

This list does not necessarily encompass all actions that may be of benefit to the Partridge Pigeon (western), but highlights those that are considered to be of highest priority at the time of preparing the conservation advice.

Existing Plans/Management Prescriptions that are Relevant to the Species

- Threat Abatement Plan for Predation by Feral Cats (EA, 1999),
- The Action Plan for Australian Birds 2000 (Garnett & Crowley, 2000), and
- Threat Abatement Plan for Predation, Habitat Degradation, Competition and Disease Transmission by Feral Pigs (DEH, 2005).

These prescriptions were current at the time of publishing; please refer to the relevant agency's website for any updated versions.

This Conservation Advice was approved by the Minister / Delegate of the Minister on:
3/7/2008

Information Sources:

Department of Environment and Heritage (DEH) 2005, *Threat abatement plan for the predation, habitat degradation, competition and disease transmission by feral pigs*, viewed 30 March 2008, <<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/publications/tap/pig/pubs/feral-pig-tap.pdf>>.

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Garnett, ST & Crowley, GM 2000, *The Action Plan for Australian Birds 2000*, Environment Australia, Canberra.

Higgins, PJ & Davies, SJF (Eds) 1996, *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds: Volume 3: Snipe to Pigeons*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Johnstone, RE & Storr, GM 1998, *Handbook of Western Australian Birds: Volume 1: Non-passerines (Emu to Dollarbird)*, Western Australian Museum, Perth.

Woinarski, J 2005, 'Living with fire – birds in northern Australia', in Weston, M & Olsen, P (Eds), 'Fire and Birds: Fire Management for Biodiversity', *Wingspan* (Supplement), vol. 15, no. 3.