

RECOVERY OUTLINE

Pied Currawong (western Victoria)

1	Family	Artamidae
2	Scientific name	<i>Strepera graculina ashbyi</i> Mathews, 1913
3	Common name	Pied Currawong (western Victoria)
4	Conservation status	Critically Endangered: C2b

5 Reasons for listing

This newly-described subspecies has possibly already been hybridised out of existence. However, until confirmation of this, there is presumed to be a single, very small, decreasing population of pure-bred birds (Critically Endangered: C2b). Almost no information on the taxon exists, so it is listed on a precautionary basis.

	Estimate	Reliability
Extent of occurrence	2,000 km ²	low
trend	decreasing	low
Area of occupancy	1,000 km ²	low
trend	decreasing	low
No. of breeding birds	250	low
trend	decreasing	low
No. of sub-populations	1	medium
Generation time	5 years	low

6 Intraspecific taxa

S. g. crissalis (Lord Howe Island) is Endangered. *S. g. magnirostris* (Cape York Peninsula), *S. g. robinsoni* (wet tropics), *S. g. graculina* (eastern Australia), and *S. g. nebulosa* (south-eastern Australia) are Least Concern, as is the species. *S. g. ashbyi* may be a morph of *S. g. nebulosa* (Schodde and Mason, 1999). Phenotypic divergence of the two subspecies is thought to have arisen after a once continuous population was separated by the basalt plains of western Victoria (Schodde and Mason, 1999). Although Pied Currawongs still appear to be isolated in the Grampians and south-west Victoria (Emison *et al.*, 1987), the presence of individuals of intermediate form in the Grampians in 1927 (Ashby, 1927, Schodde and Mason, 1999) and the Yarra Valley in 1951 (Amadon, 1951) suggests that introgression may have been occurring for some time.

7 Past range and abundance

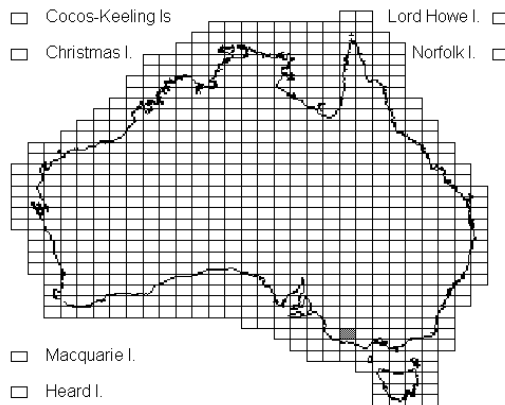
South-western Victoria with birds intermediate between *S. g. ashbyi* and *S. g. nebulosa* occurring east to Black Spur, upper Yarra valley, in the central highlands (Schodde and Mason, 1999).

8 Present range and abundance

No records of hybrids east of a line between Ballarat and Cape Otway since the 1950s.

S. g. nebulosa/*S. g. ashbyi* hybrids are present in the

Grampians, Vic. (Schodde and Mason, 1999). Pure *S. g. ashbyi*, if they exist, are likely to be in south-west Victoria but there have been no searches.



9 Ecology

Pied Currawongs generally live in forest and woodland, where they take insects and small birds and animals (Blakers *et al.*, 1984). They also frequent settlements and orchards. They lay 2-4 eggs in their nest made in tall trees (Beruldsen, 1980; Emison *et al.*, 1987). Nothing is known about the ecology of *S. g. ashbyi* in particular.

10 Threats

Introgression of the *S. g. ashbyi* population by the more widespread *S. g. nebulosa* may already have resulted in extinction of the former. Introgression may have escalated as a result of increases in tree density across western Victoria since the late the 18th century after Aboriginal burning regimes were abandoned, but before deliberate tree-clearing was universal (Barr and Cary, 1992). It is possible that the reimposition of a grassy barrier east of the Grampians will allow resumption of earlier evolutionary trends.

11 Information required

- 11.1 Develop a definition of the subspecies on the basis of both morphology and genetics.
- 11.2 Determine whether any pure *S. g. ashbyi* persist and whether there are any geographical or behavioural barriers that could be used to maintain the genetic identity of the subspecies in the wild.

12 Recovery objectives

- 12.1 Locate pure *S. g. ashbyi* population.

13 Actions completed or under way
None.

14 Management actions required

14.1 No action required until research undertaken and a policy decision taken on whether conservation of the subspecies warranted.

15 Organisations responsible for conservation

Victorian Department of Natural Resources and Environment.

16 Other organisations involved

Bird-watching societies, local government, museums.

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

Staff resources required 2001-2005

Financial resources required 2001-2005

<i>Action</i>	<i>Conservation agencies</i>	<i>Other funding sources</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Taxonomic sampling across range and refinement of taxon definition</i>	\$1,000	\$15,000	\$16,000
<i>Surveys</i>	\$5,000	\$10,000	\$15,000
<i>Total</i>	\$6,000	\$25,000	\$31,000

18 Bibliography

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Comments received from

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