

# FLORA AND FAUNA GUARANTEE - SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## FINAL RECOMMENDATION ON A NOMINATION FOR LISTING

### Victorian temperate-woodland bird community

<u>Date of consideration:</u>	5 September, 7 December 2000	<b>File No.:</b> FF/54/0088
<u>Validity:</u>	The nomination is for a valid item.	
<u>Prescribed Information:</u>	The prescribed information was provided.	
<b>Name of the Nominator</b>	is adequately provided.	

**Name of the Item** is adequately provided.

The nominated community is accepted by the SAC as a valid community because it is adequately defined and described according to accepted practice, and it is described in such a way as to be distinguished from all other communities.

The Victorian Temperate Woodland Bird Community is defined as a group of bird species characteristically and commonly found within box-ironbark, yellow box, cypress pine...(and other) woodlands (Woodland-dependent species). The assemblage has a large number of unique species which are totally or largely restricted to the temperate woodland habitat. The community, as defined, does not include all the birds occurring in these habitats; many additional species occur within but also beyond them, but these additional species (Woodland-associated species) lack the strong (and sometimes exclusive) dependence on them that the birds in the defined community exhibit. These taxa have a much broader distribution than the woodland-dependent taxa.

The bird community is defined by reference to the geographical area that defines its distribution, the habitat type the taxa occur in, and by a selected suite of native bird species, that is characteristic of and naturally restricted to, this habitat type. The geographic area that constrains this bird assemblage can be broadly defined as the country that lies in the south-east along the slopes and plains of the Great Dividing Range. The taxa included are those that have their natural Victorian distribution within the defined habitat type. The avifauna includes 24 native woodland-dependent bird species, nine of which are listed on Schedule 2 of the **Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988** and a further four which are recommended for listing (Table 1). There are an additional 21 species that occur in this habitat but are not largely or totally restricted to the temperate woodlands (Table 2). The present nomination includes the woodland-dependent species only.

There is now a substantial body of work that indicates the presence of a unique assemblage of birds in the temperate woodlands region. This assemblage has a number of unique features which separate it from bird communities in mallee, grassland and semi-arid shrublands to the west and from dry forest, wet forest and rainforest bird communities to the east (Traill and Duncan 2000). The unique character of this community is described by Robinson and Traill (1996) thus: 'Because of the woodlands' unique environment, a distinctive group of woodland-dependent birds is found there. These species have evolved in response to the long growing season and year-round availability of food, the preponderance of eucalypts and associated habitat components such as abundant tree hollows, peeling bark, nectar and other carbohydrates, the grassy ground-layer and the open structure of the vegetation. The bird fauna thus includes many species of nectar-feeder, ground-seed feeder, open-ground insect-eaters and hollow nesters.'

#### Eligibility for listing as a community under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee

The nominated item satisfies at least one criterion of the set of criteria prepared and maintained under Section 11 of the **Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988**, and stated in Schedule 1 of the **Flora and Fauna Guarantee Regulations 1990**.

#### **Evidence that criteria are satisfied:**

**Sub-criterion 2.1.1** *The community is in a demonstrable state of decline which is likely to result in a significant loss of its component taxa.*

##### *Evidence:*

The distribution of most of the native bird species identified in the nomination has declined markedly since records began. Nine of the 24 woodland-dependent species within the community have already been listed on schedule 2 of the FFG Act, while seven woodland-associated species have also been listed. There is no question that the taxa identified in the bird community have declined across the range of the Victorian temperate woodlands.

**Criterion 2.2** *The community is significantly prone to future threats which are likely to result in extinction.*

*Evidence:*

The community is subject to the ongoing impacts of habitat loss, through:

- habitat fragmentation, loss and degradation due to clearing for agriculture and other practices.
- timber loss involving the removal of overstorey trees and understorey shrub layer.
- invasion of native vegetation communities by environmental weeds.
- predation by introduced predators.

Each of these threats has been listed on Schedule 3 of the **Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988**.

**Sub-criterion 2.2.2** *The threat is currently operating and is expected to operate at a level in the future which is likely to result in the extinction of the community.*

*Evidence:*

Current trends in habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation of woodlands are continuing. This means that over the next century, major components of the Victorian woodlands avifauna will be lost as populations proceed to extinction and the composition of avifaunas change at scales ranging from the local to the continental.

Local extinctions of many woodland species are occurring across the state (eg. Hooded Robin, Speckled Warbler) and these losses are continuing (Robinson *pers. comm.*, 1993). Examples of declines and losses in birds of woodland communities have been recorded for Long Forest (Hewish *pers. comm.*), near Moyston (Kennedy *pers. comm.*), at Chiltern (Traill *pers. comm.*, Collins *pers. comm.*) and at Inverleigh Flora and Fauna Reserve (Conole *pers. comm.*).

### Additional Information

- The SAC has recently recognised the threatened status of several woodland birds by recommending for listing four species (SAC 2000a, b, c, d). Two woodland flora communities have also been recommended for listing by the Committee (SAC 1997, 1998).

- The community also meets the IUCN criteria as follows:

Draft IUCN criteria factors A (i) and (ii): 'Moderately widespread before European settlement, now <30% remains substantially unmodified, and the following apply: (i) continuing decline such that total destruction of the community is likely in the near future; (ii) continuing modification such that the community is unlikely to be capable of being substantially rehabilitated or restored or rehabilitated if the processes causing the modification continue unless work begins in the near future (Anon. 2000).

- The conservation classifications of the woodland-dependent species included in this nomination are as follows:

Common name	Scientific name	Conservation status NRE (2000):	FFG status	Robinson (1994)
Apostlebird	<i>Struthidea cinerea</i>	V	R	r
Barking Owl	<i>Ninox connivens</i>	E	L	r
Black-chinned Honeyeater	<i>Melithreptus gularis</i>	-	-	-
Brown Treecreeper sub-species <i>victoriae</i>	<i>Climacteris picumnus victoriae</i>	-	-	-
Brown-headed Honeyeater	<i>Melithreptus brevirostris pallidiceps</i>	-	-	-
Bush Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus grallarius</i>	E	L	v
Diamond Firetail	<i>Stagonopleura guttata</i>	-	R	d
Fuscous Honeyeater	<i>Lichenostomus fuscus</i>	-	-	-
Grey-crowned Babbler	<i>Pomatostomus temporalis</i>	E	L	v
Ground Cuckoo-shrike	<i>Coracina maxima</i>	E	-	r
Hooded Robin	<i>Melanodryas cucullata</i>	-	R	d
Jacky Winter	<i>Microeca fascians</i>	-	-	d
Little Lorikeet	<i>Glossopsitta pusilla</i>	-	-	d
Painted Button-quail	<i>Turnix varia</i>	-	-	-
Painted Honeyeater	<i>Grantiella picta</i>	V	L	r
Red-capped Robin	<i>Petroica goodenovii</i>	-	-	d
Red-tailed Black-cockatoo	<i>Calyptrorhynchus banksii</i>	E	L	e
Speckled Warbler	<i>Chthonicola sagittata</i>	V	R	d
Superb Parrot	<i>Polytelis swainsonii</i>	E	L	v
Swift Parrot	<i>Lathamus discolor</i>	E	L	v
Turquoise Parrot	<i>Neophema splendida</i>	LR	L	r
Regent Honeyeater	<i>Xanthomyza phrygia</i>	CE	L	e
Western Gerygone	<i>Gerygone fusca</i>	-	-	-
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater sub-species <i>meltoni</i>	<i>Lichenostomus melanops meltoni</i>	-	-	-

**Table 1:** Victorian woodland-dependent bird species and their status (Subspecies as per Schodde and Mason (1999))

The following woodland-associated species also occur in the habitat but are not included in this nomination

Common name	Scientific name	Conservation status NRE (2000):	FFG status	Robinson (1994)
Chestnut-rumped Thornbill	<i>Acanthiza uropygialis</i>	-	-	-
Crested Bellbird	<i>Oreoica gutturalis</i>	-	R	d
Crested Shrike-tit	<i>Falcunculus frontatus</i>	-	-	-
Dusky Woodswallow	<i>Artamus cyanopterus</i>	-	-	-
Eastern Yellow Robin	<i>Eopsaltria australis</i>	-	-	-
Emu	<i>Dromaius novaehollandiae</i>	-	-	d
Gilbert's Whistler	<i>Pachycephala inornata</i>	-	-	d
Glossy Black-cockatoo	<i>Calyptorhynchus lathami</i>	V	L	v
Grey Falcon	<i>Falco hypoleucos</i>	E	I	v
Major Mitchell's Cockatoo	<i>Cacatua leadbeateri</i>	V	L	r
Malleefowl	<i>Leipoa ocellata</i>	E	I	v
Masked Owl	<i>Tyto novaehollandiae</i>	E	L	r
Powerful Owl	<i>Ninox strenua</i>	E	L	r
Regent Parrot	<i>Polytelis anthopeplus</i>	V	L	v
Restless Flycatcher	<i>Myiagra inquieta</i>	-	-	-
Rufous Whistler	<i>Pachycephala rufiventris</i>	-	-	-
Southern Whiteface	<i>Aphelocephala leucopsis</i>	-	-	d
Square-tailed Kite	<i>Lophoictinia isura</i>	E	R	-
Varied Sittella	<i>Daphoenositta chrysoptera</i>	-	-	-
White-browed Babbler	<i>Pomatostomus superciliosus</i>	-	-	d
White-browed Woodswallow	<i>Artamus superciliosus</i>	-	-	-

**Table 2:** Victorian woodland-associated bird species and their status.

- FFG status: L = FFG-listed species, R = Recommended for listing, - = not nominated/assessed.
- Conservation status [as per NRE (2000)]:  
CE = critically endangered, E = endangered, V = vulnerable, LR = lower risk (near threatened)
- Robinson (1994): d = declining, r = rare, v = vulnerable, - = not assessed

### Advertisement for public comment

In accordance with the requirements of Section 14 of the **Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988**, the preliminary recommendation was advertised for a period of at least 30 days.

The preliminary recommendation was advertised in:

'The Age' - on 1 November 2000

'The Weekly Times' - on 1 November 2000

The *Government Gazette* - on 26 October 2000

Submissions closed on 1 December 2000.

### **Further evidence provided:**

One submission was received, although no new evidence was provided to warrant a review of the Scientific Advisory Committee's preliminary recommendation that the taxon is eligible for listing.

### **Documentation**

The published information provided to the SAC has been assessed. To the best of their knowledge, the SAC believes that the data presented are not the subject of scientific dispute and the inferences drawn are reasonable and well supported.

### Final Recommendation of the Scientific Advisory Committee

The Scientific Advisory Committee concludes that on the evidence available the nominated item is eligible for listing in accordance with Section 11(1) of the Act because primary criterion 2.2 and sub-criteria 2.1.1 and 2.2.2 are satisfied. The SAC also concludes that no evidence exists to suggest that primary criteria 2.1 cannot be satisfied as a consequence of sub-criteria 2.1.1 being satisfied.

The Scientific Advisory Committee recommends that the nominated item be supported for listing on Schedule 2 of the **Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988**.

#### Selected references:

- Anon (2000) *Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. Draft criteria for assessing conservation status - threatened ecological communities*. Environment Australia: Canberra.
- Garnett, S. & Crowley, G. (in press) *The Action Plan for Australian Birds - 2000*. Birds Australia/Environment Australia: Canberra.
- Garnett, S. (1992) *The Action Plan for Australian Birds*. RAOU & Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service: Canberra.
- Hobbs, R. J. & Yates, C. J. (eds)(2000) *Temperate Eucalypt Woodlands in Australia Biology, Conservation, Management and Restoration*. Surrey Beatty & Sons, Chipping Norton: Sydney.
- Lunt, I., Barlow, T. & Ross, J. (1998) *Plains Wandering: Exploring the Grassy Plains of South-eastern Australia*. p. 24. Victorian National Parks Association and Trust for Nature: Melbourne.
- Major, R. E., Christie, F. J. & Gowing, G. (in prep.) *Woodland Birds of fragmented habitat in the New South Wales wheat belt*. NSW NP&WS.
- NRE (2000) *Threatened Vertebrate Fauna in Victoria - 2000: A systematic list of vertebrate fauna considered extinct, at risk of extinction or in major decline in Victoria*. Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Melbourne.
- NSW Scientific Committee (1998) Final Determination to list the *Shorebird Community occurring on the relict tidal delta sands at Taren Point* as an Endangered Ecological Community in the Schedules of the **Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995**. NSW Scientific Committee, Sydney.
- Recher, II. F. (1999) The state of Australia's avifauna: a personal opinion and prediction for the new millennium. *Aust. Zoologist* 31:11-27.
- Reid, J. R. W. (1999) *Threatened and declining birds in the New South Wales Sheep-Wheat Belt: I. Diagnosis, characteristics and management*. Consultancy report to NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. CSIRO Wildlife and Ecology: Canberra.
- Robinson, D. (1993) Vale Toolern Vale: the loss of our woodland birds. *Wingspan* 9: 1-3, 20-21.
- Robinson, D. (1994) Research Plan for Threatened Woodland Birds of Southeastern Australia. Department of Conservation and Natural Resources: Melbourne. *Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research Tech. Report Series No. 133*.
- Robinson, D. & Traill, B. J. (1996) Conserving the Woodland Birds in the Wheat and sheep belts of southern Australia. *RAOU Conservation Statement No. 10*. Birds Australia: Melbourne.
- SAC (1991a) Final Recommendation on a nomination for listing: *Loss of hollow-bearing trees from Victorian native forests* (Nomination no. 100). Scientific Advisory Committee, Flora and Fauna Guarantee. Department of Conservation and Environment: Melbourne.
- (1991b) Final Recommendation on a nomination for listing: *Predation of native wildlife by the introduced Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes** (Nomination no. 131). Scientific Advisory Committee, Flora and Fauna Guarantee. Department of Conservation and Environment: Melbourne.
- (1995) Final Recommendation on a nomination for listing: *Predation of native wildlife by the Cat *Felis catus** (Nomination no. 355). Scientific Advisory Committee, Flora and Fauna Guarantee. Department of Conservation and Natural Resources: Melbourne.
- (1997) Final Recommendation on a nomination for listing: *Creepline Grassy Woodland (Goldfields) Community* (Nomination no. 368). Scientific Advisory Committee, Flora and Fauna Guarantee. Department of Natural Resources and Environment: Melbourne.
- (1998) Final Recommendation on a nomination for listing: *Grey Box - Buloke Grassy Woodland Community* (Nomination no. 434). Scientific Advisory Committee, Flora and Fauna Guarantee. Department of Natural Resources and Environment: Melbourne.
- (2000a) Preliminary Recommendation on a nomination for listing: Speckled Warbler *Chthonicola sagittata* (Nomination no. 485). Scientific Advisory Committee, Flora and Fauna Guarantee. Department of Natural Resources and Environment: Melbourne.
- (2000b) Preliminary Recommendation on a nomination for listing: Hooded Robin *Melanodryas cucullata* (Nomination no. 487). Scientific Advisory Committee, Flora and Fauna Guarantee. Department of Natural Resources and Environment: Melbourne.
- (2000c) Preliminary Recommendation on a nomination for listing: Diamond Firetail *Stagonopleura guttata* (Nomination no. 488). Scientific Advisory Committee, Flora and Fauna Guarantee. Department of Natural Resources and Environment: Melbourne.
- (2000d) Preliminary Recommendation on a nomination for listing: Crested Bellbird *Oreoica gutturalis* (Nomination no. 489). Scientific Advisory Committee, Flora and Fauna Guarantee. Department of Natural Resources and Environment: Melbourne.
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- Seebeck, J. H., Greenwood, L. & Ward, D. (1991) Cats in Victoria, in: *The impact of cats on native wildlife*, Proceedings of a workshop held on 8-9 May 1991. Endangered Species Unit ANP&WS: Canberra.
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**Endorsement by the Convener of the Scientific Advisory Committee**

**Date**

  
 Prof Virginia Studdert  
 Convener

10/01/01