

**FLORA & FAUNA
GUARANTEE**

**FLORA AND FAUNA GUARANTEE - SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE
FINAL RECOMMENDATION ON A NOMINATION FOR LISTING**

Victorian Mallee bird community

Date of receipt of the nomination: 6 June 2001
Date of preliminary recommendation: 13 November 2001
Date of final recommendation: 5 February 2002

File No.: FF/54/0143

Validity: The nomination is for a valid item.

Prescribed Information: The prescribed information was provided.

Name of the Nominator 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 Mallee Bird Community is defined as a group of bird species characteristically and commonly found within mallee vegetation/habitats. 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 mallee bird assemblage differs from bird communities in more mesic dry sclerophyll forests, wet sclerophyll forests, rainforests and heathland communities in the east by having a combination of:

- A higher proportion of ground foraging insectivores and nectarivores, most of which don't occur in forest or true desert communities
- A higher proportion of species dependent on natural mallee ground or shrub habitats, including two mallee specialist species (Red-lored Whistler and Mallee Emu-wren)
- The presence of high densities of Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters and/or Inland Thornbills
- The presence of a number of species largely or totally restricted to mallee habitats

The taxa included are those that have their natural Victorian distribution within the defined habitat type. The avifauna includes 20 native mallee-dependent bird species, six of which are listed on Schedule 2 of the **Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988** and a further two which have been recommended for listing (Table 1). There are an additional 23 species that occur in this habitat but are not largely or totally restricted to mallee. The present nomination includes the mallee-dependent species only.

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 this nomination has declined markedly since records began. Six of the 18 mallee-dependent species within the community have already been listed under the FFG Act, while an additional two species have been recommended for listing. Six mallee-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 mallee.

Sub-criterion 2.1.2 *The community's distribution has decreased markedly in a short time and the decrease is continuing.*

Evidence:

Prior to the settlement and clearance of the mallee a distinctive mallee-bird community was once far more widely distributed in western Victoria. Today mallee birds are largely confined to remnant habitats occurring in conservation reserves in the far north of the State.

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, fragmentation and degradation due to clearing for agriculture and other practices. The community is also subject to increased predation due to introduced predators (foxes and cats). 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:**

Large bush fires are now both more extensive and more frequent than in pre-settlement times and may threaten a number of species (eg. Black-eared Miner, Western Whipbird and Striated Grasswren). Current trends in habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation are continuing.

Additional Information

- The conservation classification of the mallee bird species mentioned in this nomination are as follows:

Mallee-dependent species	Conservation status		FFG status	Mallee-associated species	Conservation status		FFG status
	Vic.	Aust.			Vic.	Aust.	
Black-eared Miner	ce	E	L	Australian Bustard	ce	NT	L
Brown-headed Honeyeater <i>Climacteris brevirostris pallidiceps</i>	-	-	-	Black Kite	-	-	-
Chestnut Quail-thrush <i>Cinclosoma castanotus castanotus</i>	-	NT	-	Black Honeyeater	-	NT	L
Grey-fronted Honeyeater <i>Lichenostomus plumulus graingeri</i>	e	-	-	Bluebonnet	-	-	-
Jacky Winter <i>Microeca fascinans assimilis</i>	-	-	-	Brown Treecreeper <i>Climacteris picumnus victoriae</i>	-	-	-
Mallee Emu-wren	v	V	L	Chesnut-rumped Thornbill	-	-	-
Malleefowl	e	V	L	Crested Bellbird <i>Oreoica gutturalis gutturalis</i>	-	NT	L
Purple-gaped Honeyeater	-	-	-	Gilbert's Whistler	-	-	-
Shy Hylacola <i>Calamanthus cautus cautus</i>	-	NT	-	Inland Thornbill	-	-	-
Slender-billed Thornbill	lr	NT	R	Major Mitchell's Cockatoo	v	-	L
Southern Scrub-robin	-	LR	-	Mallee Ringneck	-	-	-
Splendid Fairy-wren	-	-	-	Mulga Parrot	-	-	-
Striated Grasswren	lr	NT	-	Red-capped Robin	-	-	-
Red-lored Whistler	v	V	L	Singing Honeyeater	-	-	-
Redthroat	ce	LR	R	Southern Whiteface <i>Aphelocephala leucopsis leucopsis</i>	-	LR	-
Regent Parrot <i>Polytelis anthopeplus monarchoides</i>	v	E	L	Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	-	-	-
Western Whipbird <i>Psophodes nigrogularis leucogaster</i>	dd	V	L	Spotted Nightjar	-	-	-
White-eared Honeyeater <i>Lichenostomus leucotis novaenorca</i>	-	-	-	Striped Honeyeater	-	-	-
Yellow-plumed Honeyeater	-	-	-	Variiegated Fairy-wren	-	-	-
Yellow-rumped Pardalote <i>Pardalotus punctatus xanthopyge</i>	-	-	-	Weebill	-	-	-
				White-browed Treecreeper <i>Climacteris affinis superciliosa</i>	v	-	L
				White-fronted Honeyeater	-	-	-
				Yellow-throated Miner	-	-	-

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

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)

dd = Data Deficient

- Schodde (1989) considered mallee '...as Australia's most threatened environment for birds.'
- The mallee region of south-eastern Australia is distinguished by a high number of mallee-dependent threatened taxa, however there is some overlap with avifauna of the adjacent woodland regions (Garnett and Crowley 2000, SAC 2000a).

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 26 December 2001

'The Weekly Times' - on 26 December 2001

The *Government Gazette* - on 27 December 2001

Submissions closed on 30 January 2002.

No public submissions were received on this item.

Documentation

The published information and research data provided to the SAC have 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 criteria 2.2 are satisfied. The SAC also concludes that sub-criteria 2.1.1, 2.1.2 and 2.2.2 have also been satisfied and that no evidence exists to suggest that primary criterion 2.1 cannot be satisfied as a consequence of sub-criteria 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 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:

- Garnett, S. T. & Crowley, G. M. (2000) *The Action Plan for Australian Birds - 2000*. Wimmera Mallee, p. 644. Natural Heritage Trust/Birds Australia. Environment Australia: Canberra.
- LCC (1987) *Report on the Mallee Area: Review*. Nov. 1987. Land Conservation Council: Melbourne.
- Menkhorst, P. W. & Bennett, A. F. (1990) Vertebrate fauna of the mallee vegetation in southern Australia. pp. 39-53 in *The Mallee Lands: a Conservation Perspective*. J. C. Noble, P. J. Joss and G. K. Jones (eds). CSIRO: Canberra.
- NRE (in prep.) *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Action Statement - Loss hollow-bearing trees from Victorian native forests*. Parks Flora and Fauna Division, Department of Natural Resources and Environment: Victoria.
- (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: Victoria.
- NSW Scientific Committee (2001) Preliminary Determination: 'Competition from feral bees *Apis mellifera* Linnaeus'. Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995. NSW Scientific Committee, NSW NP&WS: Hurstville.
- Paton, D. (1996) *Overview of the impacts of feral and managed honeybees in Australia*. Australian Nature Conservation Agency.
- Recher, H. F. (1999) The state of Australia's avifauna: a personal opinion and prediction for the new millennium. *Aust. Zoologist* 31: 11-27.
- Robertson, P., Bennett, A. F., Lumsden, L. F., Silveira, C. E., Johnson, P. G., Yen, A. L., Milledge, G. A., Lillywhite, P. K. & Pribble, H. J. (1989) Fauna of the Mallee study area north-western Victoria. *Arthur Rylah Inst. for Env. Res. Tech. Report Series 87*. Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands Division: Victoria.
- SAC (1991) Final Recommendation on a nomination for listing: Loss of tree hollows in Victorian native forests (Nomination no. 100). Scientific Advisory Committee, Flora and Fauna Guarantee. Department of Conservation and Natural Resources: Melbourne.
- (2000a) Final Recommendation on a nomination for listing: *Victorian temperate-woodland bird community* (Nomination 512). Scientific Advisory Committee, Flora and Fauna Guarantee. Department of Natural Resources and Environment: Melbourne.
- (2000b) Final Recommendation on a nomination for listing: Crested Bellbird *Oreoica gutturalis* (Nomination 389). Scientific Advisory Committee, Flora and Fauna Guarantee. Department of Natural Resources and Environment: Melbourne.


Schodde, R. (1989) *The Bird Fauna of the Mallee – its Biogeography and Future*. pp. 61-70 in *The Mallee Lands: a Conservation Perspective*. J. C. Noble, P. J. Joss and G. K. Jones (eds). CSIRO: Canberra.

Silveira, C. E. (1993) *The recovery Plan for Australia's threatened mallee birds – addressing fire as a threatening process. Research Phase*. RAOU and ANP&WS: Canberra.

----- (in prep.) Flora and Fauna Guarantee Action Statement, Red-lored Whistler *Pachycephala rufogularis*. Parks Flora and Fauna Division, Department of Natural Resources and Environment: Melbourne.

Endorsement by the Convenor of the Scientific Advisory Committee

Date



Prof Virginia Studdert
Convenor

11 FEB 2002