

CONSERVATION CORNER



Diamond Firetail

Scientific name

Stagonopleura guttata

Conservation status

Near Threatened.

Reasons for listing

This species has declined over most of its historical range.

Past range and abundance

Eastern Australia, from Eyre Peninsula, S.A., to Cardwell, Qld, mostly on the inland slopes of the Great Dividing Range.

Present range and abundance

No longer recorded north of Clermont, Qld, and is probably lost from this area as well as the Lockyer Valley. Apparently declined in density throughout New South Wales particularly in areas where only small habitat fragments remain. Numbers have also decreased in Victoria and South Australia with Eyre Peninsula, Flinders Ra. and Mt Lofty Ra. sub-populations all likely to be isolated.

Ecology

Diamond Firetails live in a wide range of eucalypt-dominated vegetation communities that have a grassy understorey, including woodland, forest and mallee. Most occur on the inland slopes of the Great Dividing Range, with only small pockets near the coast. They feed on seeds, mostly of grasses build a bottle-shaped nest, and have a usual clutch size of 4-5 eggs.

Threats

The Diamond Firetail is one of a suite of species that have declined from woodlands in south-eastern Australia. Much of its habitat has been cleared, and remaining fragments are gradually becoming unsuitable. Factors that have been postulated to be adversely affecting Diamond Firetails in particular include loss of key food plants and habitat as a result of invasion

by exotic grasses that are more suitable for flock-foraging Red-browed Finches *Neochmia temporalis*, whose expansion in some areas may have disadvantaged Diamond Firetails. Isolated sub-populations may be susceptible to illegal trapping.

Recommended actions

- Determine characteristics of biology that make species susceptible to fragmentation.
- Protect all woodland in which Diamond Firetails are known to be resident from clearing, monitoring compliance biennially.
- Place all Diamond Firetail sub-populations on public land under secure conservation management, particularly those in timber reserves, transport corridors and local government land.
- Within the firetail's range, manage at least 15% of the pre-European area of all woodland communities on public or private land for nature conservation, using incentives where necessary.
- Using appropriate incentives, undertake extension with land-holders that have suitable woodland habitat to promote sound management of remnants, particularly the retention of native grasslands, and encourage greater connections between sub-populations.
- Promote re-vegetation and land reclamation that recreates woodland habitat with a full complement of biodiversity, including the firetail.
- Control and reduce firewood collection from areas occupied by Diamond Firetails, promoting woodlot development close to markets, and grazing densities where necessary.
- Undertake long term monitoring of remnant sub-populations.

**TAKEN FROM:
The Action Plan for Australian Birds 2000
Stephen Garnett and Gabriel Crowley.**