



## *The Avicultural Society of New South Wales (ASNSW)*

*(Founding in 1940 as the Parrot & African Lovebird Society of Australia)*

*PO Box 248, Panania NSW 2213, Australia*

# **Threatened Species in Australian Aviculture (3rd Edition) 2012 update and a report card on performance to date:**

*(ASNSW Meeting - September 2012)*

**By Graeme Phipps**

This article focuses on species that are, or once were listed as threatened and figure in captivity in Australia, either in private collections or in zoos.

## **Background**

'Threatened Species in Australian Aviculture' was first written when 'Birds to Watch 2' and also the first edition of the then Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union (now Birds Australia's) Action Plan for Australian Birds was published. Originally I provided a listing by matching species of birds thought to figure in Australian aviaries to threatened and near threatened native and exotic avian species mentioned in those sources; and I added analogues of those species in Australian aviculture. A second edition, an update, followed the second edition of the Action Plan for Australian Birds and also Stephen Garnett's presentation at a 1999 avicultural convention in which there were some promising opportunities for aviculture outlined by Garnett.

Now there has been a third edition of the Action Plan. However, sensibly Red Data lists are not printed as bound books any more but are available on the web- because status of birds changes with respect to more information, and/or improving or more usually worsening situations for species in the wild. Birds Australia should cease printing their tomes also, and elect to have the information available online.

In fact, I think that their publication confers little benefit to the conservation and sustainability of birds, because it is just another report added to the mountains of reports produced by NGOs who are advocates for conservation, but are not activists for conservation. What doesn't happen is for there to be any significant implementation of the issues mentioned in the reports. A plan is not an 'action'... it is just a plan. And calling something an 'action' plan is just another self-deluding oxymoron, given that there is little 'action'.

That hasn't changed is the almost ZERO response from aviculture. We have to turn that around. At the very least we should produce HUSBANDRY GUIDELINES for species in our care which are either threatened species, or are uess of threatened species that relate to Australian aviculture. I have a template available for anyone who would like to write one.

In my current role as a teacher for Captive Animals students, Husbandry Guidelines are produced as part of the requirements of their certificate. The Australasian Society for Zoo Keeping (ASZK) selects those that are worthy of publication and add them to the global registry of Husbandry Guidelines - for which see <http://www.aszk.org.au> and go to Husbandry Guidelines. My keepers have uploaded over 100 husbandry guidelines to date, of which 25 are avian, and seven are of threatened species or analogues of them. These are currently published as PDFs, however since 'enhancements are invited' there is really no convenient way for enhancements to be included. So I am looking at their publication as wikis – which means that continuous improvements are catered for. Not only that, but keepers can be expected to make small improvements whereas many couldn't or wouldn't commit to writing a full set of Husbandry Guidelines – even though these are very important documents.

Husbandry Manuals or Guidelines not only deliver important animal welfare benefits to the birds in our care; but can be made to deliver important value to conservation of birds if facts drawn from captive management, blended with information drawn from the wild are added into DATA SHEETS which provide information for Population and Habitat Viability Assessment and Analysis Workshops (PHVAs). These workshops result in worthwhile options being developed which can make a huge difference to threatened species as they identify go-forward actions which if taken will likely lead to the measurable improvement to the population that was modelled. Definitely worth doing. Moreover, a good Husbandry Guidelines document contributes over half the data required to do a PHVA and also highlights gaps in knowledge.

My students do the Husbandry Guidelines because they have to. Rarely do working zoo keepers create them, so I don't imagine that aviculturists will all of a sudden rush to write one. But we must promote that, because their experience and deep knowledge, and hence their potential contribution to species survival could be huge.

So who might do any of this? "Always do what you always do, and you always get what you've always got. Instead of focussing on individual breeders, it is better in my opinion to form GROUPS – whether at Society or Club level or across several clubs – so that there is enough 'heat of reaction' developed to generate results, and also a group or team will maintain momentum and keep to targets better.

Another avenue would be to engage new members from the general community who would be prepared to keep birds primarily to make a personal contribution to the survival of species. For the sake of the birds. For their intrinsic value.

These initiatives are only worth something if efforts are co-ordinated and part of programs. Given that aviculturists have done little to date, and also the zoo industry – which is professionally responsible so with greater reason should co-ordinate the captive populations of at least all threatened species- but don't; then perhaps there is a very substantial role out there, not just for Conservation Aviculturists, but also for Avicultural Conservationists. A database to co-ordinate all of this has already been created by me (REGASP) for the zoo industry when I was the principal curator at Taronga Zoo. It was developed from an even earlier database system called OZCOLL – the Australasian Collection which was to cover all birds in captivity whether in zoos or in private collections- but it was not workable at the time. The 'zoo version' REGASP is a good sketch pad–so it would be relatively simple to create a copy for private aviculture if, zoos don't want to take on the coordinating role.

So whereas previously the purpose of these reviews (Editions 1 and 2) was to draw the attention of the avicultural community to the number of species in their collections which qualified for much more coordinated captive management – which is nothing more than good practice anyway – because we would not want these species dying out in Australia – the reality is, that we just have to move to ACTION.

I think the focus needs to be more on the CONSERVATIONIST who would like to develop bird keeping skills than hoping that bird keepers will develop conservation priorities. It hasn't happened- it's not why people are in aviculture.

There are many candidate species to work with, because of the long list of species now listed as threatened or near threatened. When you scan this list you will note species such as the Java Sparrow *Padda oryzivora*, a common cagebird; and also the Fischer's Lovebird *Agapornis fischeri* and Yellow-fronted Parakeet *Cyanoramphus auriceps* – all common cagebirds. This suggests a couple of things. One, doing threatened species work is available to anyone - threatened species no longer equals expensive; and Two - where do you think it is all going to end? If a Java Sparrow has its survival under threat in the wild, how can we know what species currently common in aviculture might end up representing important 'insurance policies' for species in the wild. Or to put it another way, there is an obligation to responsibly manage all species in our care.

Australian native species should receive particular attention. Many are unknown to aviculture outside Australia. There is the opportunity for these species to be kept in climatic conditions similar to the wild, thus avoiding the problem of birds adapting too closely to captive conditions over generations. Additionally, there is an opportunity and responsibility to be integrated with conservation efforts of these species in the wild. Generally there are no such programs, but via the PHVA process mentioned above there is no reason why aviculturally trained conservationists couldn't drive the agenda.

So things are grim for a lot of species. Study the list and think about it. Maybe take the view that you are the one who is going to make a difference. You would be surprised how much the fortunes of a species can be affected positively by the focused work of just one person. But then think about the advantages of a TEAM approach (Together Each Achieves More).

## The lists – as at 2012

The codes against the species are as follows:

EX = Extinct.

CR = Critically Endangered:

*Which means that the species faces an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild in the immediate future.*

EN = Endangered:

*The species is facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild in the medium-term future.*

VU = Vulnerable:

*The species is facing a high risk of extinction in the wild in the medium-term future.*

NT = Near Threatened *is what it says.*

Included in these categories are a series of criteria which include consideration of A) whether the species is in rapid decline; B) if it has small range, plus if the populations are fragmented, declining or fluctuating; C) whether the population overall is small and is declining; D) if it has a very small population; and E) if the species has received an unfavourable Population Viability Assessment as a result of a workshop.

I am stunned at how few Critically Endangered species have any Population and Habitat Viability Assessment workshops conducted. How threatened does a species need to get before this exercise is done?

ZOOs:

*At the end of a species indicates that it is mainly kept in zoos in Australia rather than in private aviculture.*

In case you were wondering why I take such a desolate view of the management of threatened species in zoos and in private aviculture, just consider the text of the TAG (Taxon Advisory Group) for Birds – which is part of the Australian Species Management Program for the Swinhoe's Pheasant *Lophura swinhoei*:

"TAG Notes: The species is afforded CITES 1 status primarily due to the risk of trade on the remaining wild population. There are no current recovery plans that identify the need for captive management in support of any direct recovery actions. **The primary role in captivity in Australasia is that of education/interpretation.** Captive holdings of this species appear to persist in Australia only as the NZ population appears to have gone locally extinct. There are only a few holders in both the zoo and private sector. There are no import health standards in place to facilitate the import of the species from outside of the region, including export from Australia to New Zealand. The keeping of pheasants is regionally in decline. **The TAG will need to monitor the status of all pheasant species if there is going to be a reliance on the private sector to supply display specimens as a long term management option in preference to in-house breeding.** Those held in both the private and public sector are of unknown pedigree, thus the pursuit of any genetic management is not a current goal for the TAG."

There is good news and bad news here. The first bolded sentence is bad news in that zoos think that education/interpretation is their primary role, whereas actually that could just as easily be the role of a museum. The fact that zoos hold living animals means that there is a responsibility for them to manage those populations sustainably. I take the view that for whatever instrumental reason we keep species in captivity – display in zoos, display in people's gardens – basically for the enjoyment of humans; there is still a responsibility to maintain a captive self-sustaining population of that species. The options available to a wild population - perhaps more exactly the web of interrelationships - don't exist in captivity, thus as a consequence of taking them from the wild we cannot also take away their very existence as a functional species. They have a right to exist, their lives as species – results of millions of years of evolution should not be snuffed out simply because we mismanage the situation.

The good news is in the second bold faced sentence, where at least there is recognition that if they are not themselves breeding anything, but are relying on the private community - and that they propose to monitor that. Zoos are currently breeding very few birds, in fact their bird collections are in a terrible way. However, regarding 'monitoring' Swinhoe's Pheasants - they are already locally extinct in New Zealand so one needs to do way more than just monitor - and observe that the last one just fell off a twig. What monitoring will trigger what action? Note that my listing relates to Australian aviculture not New Zealand aviculture.

Herewith follows is my list. Please advise on any errors as I find it hard to keep absolutely up to date with the species in Australian aviculture - particularly *Pyrrhura conures*.

## Endangered species

14 species

Four species have moved from VULNERABLE to ENDANGERED since the last publication of ten years previous - which is terrible. These should be immediate priorities. We should at least review WHY they have been up listed and look carefully at our populations and what options are out there.

Yellow-headed Amazon	<i>Amazona oratrix</i>	EN
Red-crowned Amazon	<i>Amazona viridigenalis</i>	EN (Green-cheeked)
Hyacinthine Macaw 2.0.0	<i>Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus</i>	EN was VU
Red-fronted Macaw 2.1.0	<i>Ara rubrogenys</i>	EN
Sun Parakeet 28.35.11	<i>Aratinga solstitialis</i>	EN
Red Siskin 5.1.0	<i>Carduelis cucullata</i>	EN
Red and Blue Lory	<i>Eos histrio</i>	EN
Golden Parakeet	<i>Guaruba guarouba</i>	EN was VU
Yellow Cardinal	<i>Gubernatrix cristata</i>	EN Green Cardinal
Swift Parrot 13.10.16	<i>Lathamus discolor</i>	EN
Purple-naped Lory	<i>Lorius domicella</i>	EN was VU
Green Peafowl 8.11.0	<i>Pavo muticus</i>	EN was VU
Golden-shouldered Parrot 6.5.0	<i>Psephotus chrysopterygius</i>	EN
Thick-billed Parrot	<i>Rhynchopsitta pachyrhyncha</i>	EN

## Vulnerable species

23 species

Some good news and bad news in the VULNERABLE category. Partridge pigeon and Kea have moved up but Black-cheeked Lovebirds have moved down. Interesting to see why this would be.

Black-cheeked Lovebird	<i>Agapornis nigrigenis</i>	VU was EN
Southern Brown Kiwi	<i>Apteryx australis</i>	VU now EX in captivity in Australia, Zoos
Green Avadavat	<i>Amandava Formosa</i>	VU
Yellow-naped Amazon	<i>Amazona auropalliata</i>	VU
Festive Amazon	<i>Amazona festiva</i>	VU
Lilac-crowned Amazon	<i>Amazona finschi</i>	VU was NT
Military Macaw	<i>Ara militaris</i>	VU
White Cockatoo	<i>Cacatua alba</i>	VU
Salmon-crested Cockatoo	<i>Cacatua moluccensis</i>	VU
Southern Cassowary	<i>Casuarius casuarius johnstonii</i>	VU, Zoos
Red crowned Parakeet 60.40.53	<i>Cyanoramphus novaezelandiae</i>	VU (Rf Kakariki)
Black-winged Lory	<i>Eos cyanogenia</i>	VU
Partridge Pigeon 1.3.6	<i>Geophaps smithii</i>	VU was NT
Victoria Crowned Pigeon 2.0.0	<i>Goura victoria</i>	VU, Zoos, but functionally extinct really
Malleefowl 10.11.0	<i>Leipoa ocellata</i>	VU, Zoos
Chattering Lory 5.5.0	<i>Lorius garrulus</i>	VU
Kea 27.15.0	<i>Nestor notabilis</i>	VU was NT
Java Sparrow 0.0.516	<i>Padda oryzivora</i>	VU
White-bellied Parrot	<i>Pionites leucogaster</i>	VU
African Grey Parrot 2.6.0	<i>Psittacus erithacus</i>	VU
Timneh Grey Parrot	<i>Psittacus timneh</i>	VU
Blue-throated Conure	<i>Pyrrhura cruentata</i>	VU (Blue-chested, ochre-marked)
Reeves Pheasant 3.5.0	<i>Syrnaticus reevesi</i>	VU

## Near Threatened species

21 species

Fischer's Lovebird	<i>Agapornis fischeri</i>	NT
Lilian's (Nyassa) Lovebird 0.0.2	<i>Agapornis lilianae</i>	NT
Cuban Amazon	<i>Amazona leucocephala</i>	NT
Blue-winged Macaw	<i>Ara maracana</i>	NT (was VU)
Golden-capped Parakeet	<i>Aratinga aurocapillus</i>	NT (was VU)
Nicobar Pigeon 34.20.17	<i>Caloenas nicobarica</i>	NT
Northern Bobwhite	<i>Colinus virginianus</i>	NT
Japanese Quail	<i>Coturnix japonica</i>	NT
Yellow-crowned Parakeet 27.21.19	<i>Cyanoramphus auriceps</i>	NT
Blue-streaked Lory	<i>Eos reticulata</i>	NT
Gouldian Finch 51.52.217	<i>Erythrura gouldiae</i>	NT (was EN)
Luzon Bleeding-heart Pigeon 8.13.4	<i>Gallicolumba luzonica</i>	NT
Swinhoe's Pheasant 3.5.0	<i>Lophura swinhoi</i>	NT
White-naped Lory	<i>Lorius albidinucha</i>	NT
Blue-billed Duck 18.16.11	<i>Oxyura australis</i>	NT
Princess Parrot 23.9.7	<i>Polytelis alexandrae</i>	NT (was VU)
Derbyan Parakeet 3.3.0	<i>Psittacula derbiana</i>	NT
Long-tailed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula longicauda</i>	NT
Greater Rhea	<i>Rhea americana</i>	NT, Zoos
Mindanao Lorikeet	<i>Trichoglossus johnstoniae</i>	NT (was VU)
Black-breasted Buttonquail 4.4.0	<i>Turnix melanogaster</i>	NT (was EN)

## Total Threatened species

58 species

## Least concern species

22 species

These may have been down listed... which is good news; but... why are they no longer of concern? We need to know why the original listing was made and the reasons for the down listing. These species are worth keeping an eye on in my opinion, because usually the down listing would be due to changes in the rating system rather than as a result of any recovery actions. In other words, perhaps the majority of these shouldn't have been listed higher in the first place.

One needs to have confidence with the rating systems, and those doing the assessments; otherwise the main 'contribution' made by some organisations is simply to advocate for conservation by publishing lists, but doing nothing worthwhile to measurably change things for those species. The Action Plans for Australian Birds is likely funded by grants from the Australian federal government, hence the Australian taxpayer... these should be published ONLINE and in a form whereby ongoing enhancements are easily possible. May this article not be a further contribution to any talk fest.

I note that most of these species are analogues of threatened species, so Husbandry Guidelines on any of them is worthwhile.

Glossy Black-Cockatoo 1.3.0	<i>Calyptorhynchus lathami</i>	LC (was VU)
Siamese Fireback	<i>Lophura diardi</i>	LC (was VU)
Star Finch	<i>Neochmia ruficauda</i>	LC (was VU)
Scarlet-chested Parrot 7.7.0	<i>Neophema splendida</i>	LC (was VU)
Black-throated Finch (sthn)	<i>Poephila cincta cincta</i>	LC (was VU)
Superb Parrot 19.12.7	<i>Polytelis swainsoni</i>	LC (was VU)
Freckled Duck	<i>Stictonetta naevosa</i>	LC (was VU)
Chestnut-backed Buttonquail	<i>Turnix castanota</i>	LC (was VU)
Mandarin Duck	<i>Aix galericulata</i>	LC (was NT)
Moluccan King-parrot	<i>Alisterus amboinensis</i>	LC (was NT)
Pink Cockatoo 23.24.3	<i>Cacatua leadbeateri</i>	LC (was NT)
Western Corella	<i>Cacatua pastinator</i>	LC (was NT)
Lady Amherst's Pheasant 13.11.2	<i>Chrysolophus amherstiae</i>	LC (was NT)
Golden Pheasant 16.19.4	<i>Chrysolophus pictus</i>	LC (was NT)
Red-eared Firetail	<i>Emblema oculata</i>	LC (was NT)
Turquoise Parrot	<i>Neophema pulchella</i>	LC (was NT)
Yellow-rumped Munia	<i>Lonchura flaviprymna</i>	LC (was NT)
Pictorella Munia	<i>Lonchura pectoralis</i>	LC (was NT)
Flock Bronzewing	<i>Phaps histrionica</i>	LC (was NT)
Palm Cockatoo	<i>Probosciger aterrimus</i>	LC (was NT)
Hooded Parrot	<i>Psephotus dissimilis</i>	LC (was NT)
Double-eyed Fig-Parrot	<i>Cyclopsitta diophthalma</i>	LC

## Analogues

These are species we care for which are very closely related to threatened Species – that is, species whose future in the wild is bleak and are in need of help.

### Analogues for critically endangered species

6 species

#### THIS IS THE HIGHEST PRIORITY IN MY OPINION.

Red-fronted Kakariki 0.0.0 6.6.0 *Cyanoramphus novaezelandiae* VU for  
Norfolk Island Parakeet 60.40.53 *Cyanoramphus cookii* CR

Yellow-crowned Kakariki 27.21.19 *Cyanoramphus auriceps* NT for  
Malherbe's Parakeet 8.7.28 *Cyanoramphus malherbi* CR

Swinhoe's Pheasant *Lophura swinhoei* 3.5.0 NT for  
Edwards's Pheasant *Lophura edwardsii* CR (now EX in Australian Aviculture)

Blue-winged Parrot *Neophema chrystostoma* *N. petrophila* or other *Neophema* species  
for Orange-bellied Parakeet 41.40.28 *Neophema chrysogaster* CR (was EN)

Honeyeater species – Blue-faced Honeyeater 10.6.6 *Entomyzon cyanotis* for  
Regent Honeyeater 24.19.11 *Xanthomyza phrygia* CR

Silvereye 2.4.57 *Zosterops lateralis* for  
White-throated White-eye *Zosterops albogularis* CR (+ other *Zosterops*)

### Analogues for endangered species

10 species

Black Cockatoo 48.50.9 *Calyptorhynchus* sp. for  
Baudin's Black Cockatoo 6.4.0 *Calyptorhynchus baudinii* EN (was VU)

Black Cockatoo 48.50.9 *Calyptorhynchus* sp. for  
Carnaby's Black Cockatoo 8.8.0 *Calyptorhynchus latirostris* EN (was VU)

Yellow-crowned Parakeet (Kakariki) 27.21.19 *Cyanoramphus auriceps* NT for  
Chatham Parakeet *Cyanoramphus forbesi* EN

Madagascar Red Fody 7.4.2 *Foudia madagascariensis* for Mauritius Fody *Foudia rubra* EN

Banded Landrail 17.16.78 *Gallirallus philippensis* for Lord Howe Woodhen *Gallirallus sylvestris* EN

Noisy Miner *Manorina melanocephala* for Black-eared Miner *Manorina melanotis* EN

Spotted Pardalote *Pardalotus* for Forty-spotted Pardalote *Pardalotus quadragintus* EN

Painted Buttonquail 5.3.14 *Turnix varius* for Plains Wanderer *Pedionomus torquatus* EN (was VU)

Painted Buttonquail 5.3.14 *Turnix varius* for Buff-breasted Buttonquail *Turnix olivii* E

White's Ground Thrush *Zoothera lunulata* for Spotted Ground Thrush *Zoothera guttata* EN and many others.

### Analogues for vulnerable species

10 species

Striated Grasswren *Amytornis striatus* NT for White-throated Grasswren *Amytornis woodwardi* VU and others

Brolga 21.15.1 *Grus rubicundus* for Sarus Crane *Grus antigone* VU (was NT)

Small Honeyeaters for Painted Honeyeater *Grantiella picta* VU

Brush Turkey 0.2.18 *Alectura lathamii* for Malleefowl 10.11.0 *Leipoa ocellata* VU

Orange-footed Scrubfowl 1.1.0 *Megapodius reinwardt* for various *Megapodes* VU

Golden Whistler *Pachycephala pectoralis* for Red-lored Whistler *Pachycephala rufogularis* VU

Noisy Pitta 8.13.5 *Pitta versicolor* for at least eight Pitta species VU, and six Pitta species NT!

Superb Fruit dove 26.26.2 *Ptilinopus superbus* for several *Ptilinopus* species VU

*Pyrhura* Conures for several *Pyrhura* species VU

Gouldian Finch 51.52.217 *Erythrura gouldiae* NT for

Green-faced Parrotfinch *Erythrura viridifacies* VU – now EX in Australia plus other *Erythrurae*.

## **Analogue for near threatened species**

**5 species**

Australian Darter *Anhinga novaehollandiae* – for Oriental Darter *Anhinga melanogaster* NT

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanua axillaris* for Letter-winged Kite *Elanus scriptus* NT

Black-necked Stork 6.5.0 *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus australis*

for Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* NT

Scarlet Robin *Petroica multicolor* for Flame Robin *Petroica phoenicea* NT

Varied Lorikeet *Psitteuteles varius* for Iris Lorikeet *Psitteuteles iris* NT

## **Total analogue opportunities**

**31 species**

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**The Avicultural Society of New South Wales (ASNSW):** <http://www.aviculturalsocietynsw.org>

**Membership Secretary:** PO Box 248, Panania NSW 2213, Australia

**E-mail:** [aviculturalsocietynsw@yahoo.com.au](mailto:aviculturalsocietynsw@yahoo.com.au)

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