

Neophema elegans Elegant Parrot

Taxonomy

Neophema elegans Gould 1837

Current conservation status

Categorised as Vulnerable in the 2013 Advisory list of threatened vertebrate fauna in Victoria (DSE 2013).

Proposed conservation status

Vulnerable in Victoria

Criterion D

For species that also occur outside of Victoria, the *Guidelines for Application of IUCN Red List Criteria at Regional and National Levels: Version 4.0 (2012)* apply. This may lead to an adjustment of the threat category, to reflect the influence of adjacent populations.

The regional assessment (Victoria only) results in Endangered. The birds are not regarded as threatened in other Australian states, so this assessment has been downgraded to Vulnerable to account for the influence of interstate populations that reduce the extinction risk in Victoria.

Species Information

Description and Life History

Elegant Parrots are golden-olive, with a yellow facial mask; the forehead band is dark blue, narrowly edged pale blue, and extends just past the eye. There is a narrow, dark/light blue band around the wing; the underparts are buttercup-yellow, and some have an orange belly (Pizzey and Knight 2012).

Elegant Parrots usually feed on the ground, where they take the seeds of grasses or low-growing shrubs, and they occasionally feed in farmland and on spilt grain by the side of the road. Nesting in hollow branches of trees, Elegant Parrots lay between four and seven white eggs which are incubated by the female.

Generation Length

The generation length of the Elegant Parrot is estimated to be 4 to 5 years. This is based on a congener, the Orange-bellied Parrot. BirdLife International (2019) gives an (estimated) figure of 4.9 years, so a range has been indicated.

Distribution

In Australia there are two isolated populations of Elegant Parrots; one is in the southwest of Western Australia and the other is centred in South Australia. There are occasional sightings in western Victoria in winter and spring (Emison et al. 1987). Single birds are occasionally seen with flocks of Blue-winged Parrots in coastal saltmarshes on the western side of Port Phillip Bay (Emison op. cit. p. 156). The birds are partly nomadic, particularly at the edges of range, with some small-scale seasonal movements (Collar and Boesman 2019).

Habitat

In Victoria Elegant Parrots have been recorded from mallee scrubs, dry woodlands, and samphire shrublands, and coastal saltmarshes (Emison et al. 1987).

Threats

Although BirdLife International (2019) states that: 'The population is suspected to be increasing as ongoing habitat degradation is creating new areas of suitable habitat', this is not believed to be the case in Victoria where numbers have remained low for many years (M. O'Brien pers. comm. March 2018). As is the case with other ground-feeding birds, they may be subject to predation by introduced predators, but in general there are probably few threats.

IUCN Criteria

Criterion A. Population size reduction. Population reduction (measured over the longer of 10 years or 3 generations) based on any of A1 to A4			
	Critically Endangered	Endangered	Vulnerable
A1	≥ 90%	≥ 70%	≥ 50%
A2, A3, A4	≥ 80%	≥ 50%	≥ 30%
A1 Population reduction observed, estimated, inferred or suspected in the past and the causes of the reduction are clearly reversible AND understood AND ceased. A2 Population reduction observed, estimated, inferred or suspected in the past where the causes of the reduction may not have ceased OR may not be understood OR may not be reversible. A3 Population reduction, projected or suspected to be met in the future (up to a maximum of 100 years) [(a) cannot be used for A3] A4 An observed, estimated, inferred, projected or suspected population reduction where the time period must include both the past and the future (up to a max. of 100 years in future), and where the causes of reduction may not have ceased OR may not be understood OR may not be reversible. based on any of the following: (a) direct observation [except A3] (b) an index of abundance appropriate to the taxon (c) a decline in area of occupancy, extent of occurrence and/or quality of habitat (d) actual or potential levels of exploitation (e) the effects of introduced taxa, hybridization, pathogens, pollutants, competitors or parasites			

Evidence:

Ineligible under Criterion A

The past population reduction does not meet the threshold for eligibility under criterion A2, and the future population reduction does not meet the threshold for eligibility under criterion A3. There is thought to have been no past decline or any anticipated future decline.

Criterion B. Geographic range in the form of either B1 (extent of occurrence) and/or B2 (area of occupancy)			
	Critically Endangered Very restricted	Endangered Restricted	Vulnerable Limited
B1. Extent of occurrence (EOO)	< 100 km ²	< 5,000 km ²	< 20,000 km ²
B2. Area of occupancy (AOO)	< 10 km ²	< 500 km ²	< 2,000 km ²
AND at least 2 of the following 3 conditions:			
(a) Severely fragmented OR Number of locations	= 1	≤ 5	≤ 10
(b) Continuing decline observed, estimated, inferred or projected in any of: (i) extent of occurrence; (ii) area of occupancy; (iii) area, extent and/or quality of habitat; (iv) number of locations or subpopulations; (v) number of mature individuals			
(c) Extreme fluctuations in any of: (i) extent of occurrence; (ii) area of occupancy; (iii) number of locations or subpopulations; (iv) number of mature individuals			

Evidence:

Ineligible under Criterion B

The Extent of Occurrence (EoO) across the taxon's range, based on accepted, post-1970 records in the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas (VBA), is estimated to be 106,548 km² which exceeds the threshold for criterion B.

The Area of Occupancy (AoO) across the taxon's range, based on 2 x 2 km grids derived from accepted, post-1970 records in the VBA, is estimated to be 200 km², but other thresholds under this criterion have not been met.

Criterion C. Small Population size and decline				
		Critically Endangered	Endangered	Vulnerable
Number of mature individuals		< 250	< 2,500	< 10,000
AND at least one of <u>C1</u> or <u>C2</u>				
<u>C1</u>	An observed, estimated or projected continuing decline of at least (up to a max. of 100 years in future):	25% in 3 years or 1 generation (whichever is longer)	20% in 5 years or 2 generations (whichever is longer)	10% in 10 years or 3 generations (whichever is longer)
<u>C2</u>	An observed, estimated, projected or inferred continuing decline AND least 1 of the following 3 conditions:			
(a)	(i) Number of mature individuals in each subpopulation	≤ 50	≤ 250	≤ 1,000
	(ii) % of mature individuals in one subpopulation =	90 – 100%	95 – 100%	100%
(b) Extreme fluctuations in the number of mature individuals				

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Evidence:

Ineligible under Criterion C

It is estimated that there are 80 mature individuals, but other thresholds under this criterion have not been met.

Criterion D - Very small or restricted population ^a			
	Critically Endangered ^a	Endangered ^a	Vulnerable ^a
Number of mature individuals (observed or estimated) ^a	<50 ^a	<250 ^a	<1,000 ^a
D2: Only applies to the VU category ^b Restricted area of occupancy or number of locations with a plausible future threat that could drive the species to critically endangered or Extinct in a very short time. ^a	- ^a	- ^a	D2: Typically: ^b AoO < 20 km ² or number of locations ≤ 5 ^a

Evidence:

Eligible under Criterion D as Vulnerable

The taxon is estimated to have 80 mature individuals. No precise population figures are known for the Elegant Parrot in Australia (BirdLife International 2019), but VBA data show small numbers are regularly reported from western Victoria.

The taxon is assessed as Endangered under this criterion, but it has been downgraded to Vulnerable to account for the influence of interstate populations that reduce the extinction risk in Victoria.

Criterion E (Quantitative Analysis) was not addressed as the taxon does not have a detailed Population Viability Analysis.

References

BirdLife International (2019) *Species factsheet: Neophema elegans*. (downloaded from <http://www.birdlife.org> (<http://www.birdlife.org>) on 10/03/2019)

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Pizzey, G. and Knight, F. (2012) *The Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*. Ninth edition. Harper Collins Publishers, Australia.