

## CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSALS FOR AMENDMENT OF APPENDICES I AND II

## Proposals resulting from reviews by the Animals and Plants Committees

A. Proposal

Deletion from Appendix II, following the periodic review of the trade and biological status of the species by the Animals Committee, pursuant to Resolution Conf. 9.1.

B. Proponent

Australia

C. Supporting Statement1. Taxonomy

- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1.1 Class               | Aves                                    |
| 1.2 Order               | Gruiformes                              |
| 1.3 Family              | Turnicidae                              |
| 1.4 Genus and species   | <i>Turnix melanogaster</i> Gould (1837) |
| 1.5 Scientific synonyms | None                                    |
| 1.6 Common names        | Black-breasted button-quail             |

2. Biological Parameters

## 2.1 Distribution

Endemic to Australia.

*T. melanogaster* occurs along the north-east coast of Australia, from about Shoalwater Bay, Queensland (22°30'S, 150°30'E) south to the Northern Rivers and Tableland of northern New South Wales, (approx. 29°30'S, 153°22'E) and from the coast to about 150 km inland (Garnett, 1992a). A map of records of occurrence for the species (derived from data held by ERIN) is at Attachment A. Note, however, that Marchant & Higgins (1993) question the veracity of records north of Rockhampton.

## 2.2 Habitat availability

*T. melanogaster* occurs mainly in closed forests, particularly vine thickets and vine forests, in areas with 770-1200mm rainfall per year, and distinct wet/dry seasons. Its favoured habitat is bottle tree scrub: a seasonal rainforest of brigalow (*Acacia harpophylla*), belah (*Casuarina cristata* and bottle tree (*Brachychiton rupestris*), with or without emergent hoop pine (*Araucaria cunninghamii*), with a shrub understorey and a thick litter layer. It has, however, been observed in a range of other habitats, including rainforest margins, lantana thickets, spotted gum (*Eucalyptus maculata*) open forest and *A. cunninghamii* plantations (Marchant & Higgins, 1993).

Much of the original habitat for *T. melanogaster* has been cleared for agriculture and forestry, with the area of bottle tree scrub having decreased from several hundred thousand hectares to a few thousand hectares (Bennett, cited by Marchant & Higgins, 1993).

## 2.3 Population status

Nationally considered to be Vulnerable (*Endangered Species Protection Act 1992*), but IUCN classifies the species as being Endangered (IUCN, 1996).

## 2.4 Population trends

In the last 15 years, *T. melanogaster* has been recorded from fewer than 50 sites, and at each, less than ten birds were found (Bennett, cited by Garnett, 1992a).

## 2.5 Geographic trends

Clearance of most of the dry closed forests of south-eastern Queensland and north-eastern New South Wales has greatly reduced the range of this species (Garnett, 1992a).

## 2.6 Role of the species in its ecosystem

*T. melanogaster* is a low order omnivore, eating seeds and insects (Marchant & Higgins, 1993). The major predators of this species are unknown.

## 2.7 Threats

The principal threat to this species is clearance of its habitat for agriculture or timber plantations (Garnett, 1992a). In addition, frequent fires reduce the density of vegetation, making it less favourable for *T. melanogaster*. Other possible threats which have been suggested, but remain unsubstantiated, are trapping for the bird trade, egg collecting, and predation by introduced predators such as cats (Garnett, 1992b).

## 3. Utilization and Trade

### 3.1 National utilization

The Black-breasted Button quail is available for private possession and trade in Victoria and it appears to be secure within that trade.

At 1 January 1995, major Australian zoos held a total of 56 individuals of this species (18.20.18) (ARAZPA, 1995).

### 3.2 Legal international trade

No export permits for this species have ever been issued by the CITES Management Authority for Australia.

No specimens have been recorded in international trade in the last ten years (WCMC data).

### 3.3 Illegal trade

No illegal trade known.

### 3.4 Actual or potential trade impacts

*T. melanogaster* is a minor species in the Australian avicultural trade. The *Wildlife Protection (Regulation of Exports and Imports) Act 1982* prohibits the export of live Australian native birds for commercial purposes. A small number of species (which does not include *T. melanogaster*) may be exported as household pets of people emigrating from Australia. Delisting *T. melanogaster* from the Appendices to CITES will not, therefore, lead to an increase in the international trade of this species under current legislative arrangements.

### 3.5 Captive breeding or artificial propagation for commercial purposes (outside country of origin)

None known.

#### 4. Conservation and Management

##### 4.1 Legal status

###### 4.1.1 National

This species is listed as Vulnerable under the Commonwealth *Endangered Species Protection Act 1992* and is also listed under Schedule 2 of the *Wildlife Protection (Regulation of Imports and Exports) Act 1982*.

The *Endangered Species Protection Act 1992*, contains lists of species considered endangered or vulnerable or those that are presumed extinct. Once a species is listed under this act, the Commonwealth must prepare and implement a recovery plan for that species. The lists are based on those agreed by the Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council (ANZECC) through its Networks on Endangered Fauna and Flora.

The *Wildlife Protection (Regulation of Imports and Exports) Act 1982* is the legislative basis for conservation-oriented controls on the export and import of wildlife and wildlife products. The Act controls the export of Australian native animals and plants and fulfils Australian legislative requirements as a Party to CITES.

###### 4.1.2 International

The species is currently included in Appendix II to CITES.

##### 4.2 Species management

###### 4.2.1 Population monitoring

Garnett (1992b) indicates that a survey of the distribution and status of the species in Queensland and New South Wales was to be conducted in 1991/92, but the results of the survey have not yet been published.

###### 4.2.2 Habitat conservation

The species occurs in a number of protected areas, including: Bunya Mountains National Park; Fraser Island National Park; Ravensbourne National Park; Charlie Moreland Park; Booloumba Creek State Forest Park; Boombana National Park; Nightcap Range National Park; and Border Ranges National Park (Garnett, 1992b).

###### 4.2.3 Management measures

Current management measures for this species involve legislative protection for the species and protection of some portions of its habitat within the protected area estate. Further work is needed to elucidate the ecological requirements of the species, the impact of various forestry practices, and verification of possible predation on *T. melanogaster* by introduced carnivores.

##### 4.3 Control measures

###### 4.3.1 International trade

As indicated above, export of the species, or products derived from it, is subject to the provisions of the *Wildlife Protection (Regulation of Imports and Exports) Act 1982*. This Act is enforced by the Australian Customs Service in collaboration with the Australian Federal Police and the Australian Nature Conservation Agency.

#### 4.3.2 Domestic measures

The New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service have principal responsibility for the conservation and management of this species in New South Wales and Queensland respectively.

#### 5. Information on Similar Species

The adult female is unlike any other Australian quail, but males and juveniles may be confused with painted button quails (*Turnix varia*). *T. varia* can be distinguished from *T. melanogaster* by paler brownish-grey upperparts, with brighter rufous-brown markings, rufous-brown shoulder patch, dark eyes and grey gorget across the foreneck and breast, contrasting with a creamy belly and covered with smaller, more sparse and less prominent creamy to buff spots (Marchant & Higgins, 1993).

The Madagascar button-quail (*Turnix nigricollis*) and the Philippines ocellated button-quail (*T. ocellata*) have similar appearance, habitat preferences and behaviour to the Black-breasted button-quail (Hoser, 1991).

#### 6. Other Comments

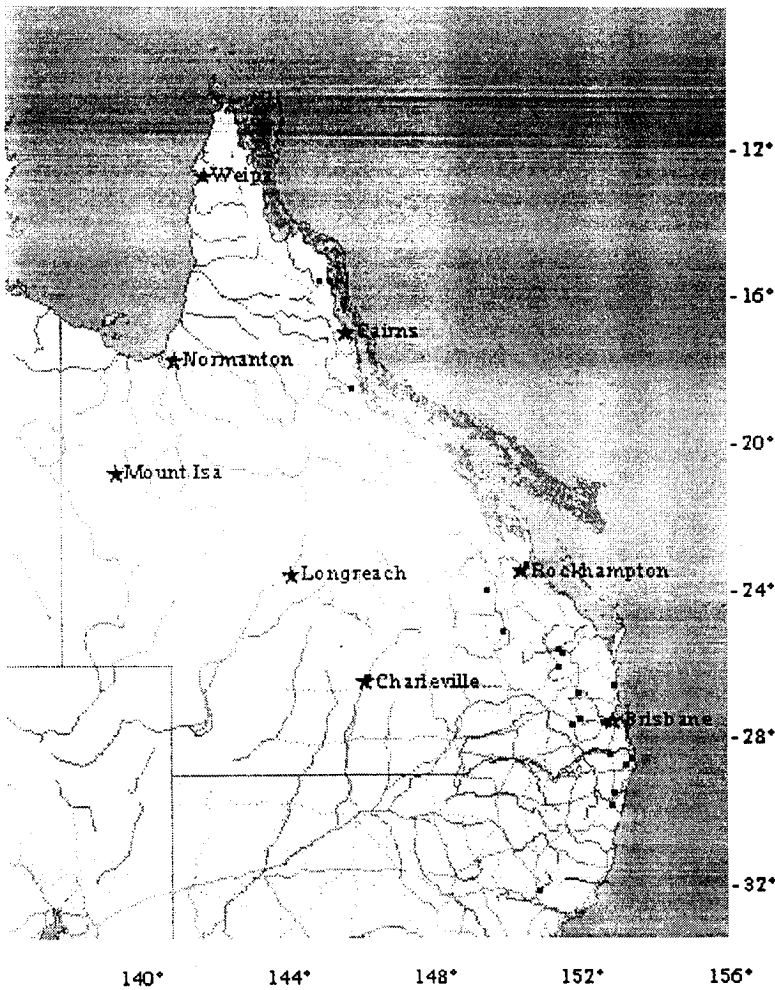
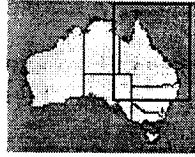
Consultation with other range States is not applicable as the species is endemic to Australia.

#### 7. References

- ARAZPA (1995) *Australasian Species Management Program - Regional Census and Plan*. 5th Edition. Australasian Regional Association of Zoological Parks & Aquaria.
- Garnett, S. (1992a) *Threatened and Extinct Birds of Australia*. RAOU & Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service. RAOU report No. 82.
- Garnett, S. (1992b) *The Action Plan for Australian Birds*. Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service.
- Gould, J (1837) *Synopsis: Birds of Australia*. 2: 31 (Original reference not sighted)
- Hoser, R.T. (1991) *Endangered Animals of Australia*. Pierson & Co, Mosman, NSW.
- IUCN (1996) *1996 IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals*. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland.
- Marchant, S & P.J. Higgins (Eds) (1993) *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds*. Vol. 2: *Raptors to Lapwings*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Map of the occurrence of *Turnix melanogaster*

**Locations of *Turnix melanogaster*  
in North Eastern Australia**



Red points mark the occurrences of queried species. The base map is based on spatial data available from the Australian Surveying and Land Information Group ([AUSLIG](#)).