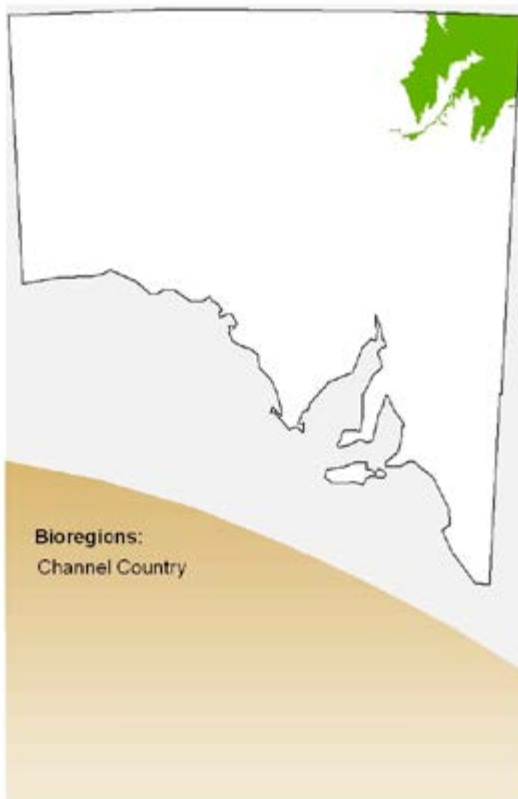


Grey Grasswren

Amytornis barbatus diamantina



Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commercial Services.

Map is not intended to indicate spatial distribution of the species, only the bioregions in which the species is found.

Grey Grasswrens are 18-21cm long with striped markings in black, white, grey and brown. One of the two subspecies of Grey Grasswren (subspecies *diamantina*) is endemic to the Goyder Lagoon in South Australia. They were not discovered at this location until 1975 when the Nature Conservation Society of SA decided to explore this area. The other subspecies (*Amytornis barbatus barbatus*) found in swamps near the New South Wales/Queensland border was discovered in 1921, and is now classified as endangered. Both subspecies are endemic to the Lake Eyre Basin. The two subspecies differ in size (subspecies *diamantina* are slightly larger) and colour/markings. The SA subspecies is named after the Diamantina River along which they occur. When they are not breeding, groups of 15–40 birds can sometimes be seen together.

Diet

They eat insect larvae, seeds, ants and small beetles.

Breeding

Grey Grasswrens breed in July and become territorial in their pairs during this time.

They make a loose, dome-like nest out of grass in clumps of cane-grass. This structure is then lined with softer grass and some feathers. The female lays two small, speckled eggs which she incubates for 13–15 days.

Habitat

The Grey Grasswren lives in dense stands of lignum and cane-grass where they are well camouflaged. This vegetation often grows along waterways, on floodplains and swampy shrublands and grasslands. Most sightings of Grey Grasswrens have been in Coolibah woodlands with lignum understorey. They can also be found in other vegetation types, but are quite reliant on lignum. Sedentary birds, they usually stay in the same area, but have been known to move in response to droughts or floods.

Threats

Habitat degradation and loss due to stock and feral animal trampling and grazing is thought to be the major threat to the Grey Grasswren. Modified water regimes may also impact on the habitat of this species, as well as the clearance of low dense vegetation for tracks. Invasive weeds along the waterways can lead to less suitable habitat being available for lignum and swamp grass to grow, and predation of the birds by feral cats and foxes is another threat.



Secretive species... People looking for these birds have described hearing a group of them twittering nearby but not being able to see a single one! This is because they usually roost, feed and breed all within the dense lignum grasses they call home.

Conservation

Conservation plans to help this species include actions such as wetland conservation and keeping stock away from stands of lignum and cane-grass.

You can help the Grey Grasswren by:

- being a responsible pet owner – keep them inside at night and don't take them into national parks
- trying to conserve areas of native grasses on waterways if you live on a property as these support many different species like the Grey Grasswren.

For further information

Public enquiries

For more local information on any of the species in this resource please contact your nearest Natural Resource Centre office on:

Eastwood: (08) 8273 9100

Gawler: (08) 8523 7700

Lobethal: (08) 8389 5900

Willunga: (08) 8550 3400

Education enquiries

For teachers wanting more information about environmental education resources and opportunities please contact the relevant NRM Education sub regional team on:

Northern Adelaide: (08) 8406 8289

Barossa: (08) 8563 8436

Central Adelaide: (08) 8234 7255

Southern Adelaide: (08) 8384 0176

Southern Fleurieu: (08) 8551 0524

