BIRD

Climacteris picumnus picumnus — Brown Treecreeper

AUS	SA	AMLR	Endemism	Residency
-	-	V	-	Resident

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Conservation Significance

The AMLR distribution is part of a limited extant distribution in adjacent regions within SA. The species has been described as 'probably declining' within the AMLR.[2] Within the AMLR the species' relative area of occupancy is classified as 'Very Restricted'.[3]

Three subspecies recognised. The subspecies *Climacteris picumnus picumnus* has the most extensive range and includes the MLR (Schodde and Mason 1999).[2]

In SA, the species is at or near the western extreme of their southern distribution (north to Flinders Ranges).[1]

The national status is considered of Least Concern by Garnett and Crowley (2000), probably because of its extensive distribution in inland areas. However, in the MLR the species is under threat and is declining in most parts of its range and it is likely the few remaining populations are quite isolated (Paton et al. 1994).[2]

Description

Small to medium grey-brown bird (Higgins et al. 2001). Grey-brown head and neck, brown back and wings, white chin and throat, and grey-brown underparts with heavy dark streaking. Bill short and slightly downcurved. Pale stripe over the eye with a darker stripe through the eye. In flight a broad, buff stripe on the wing is clearly visible. Their distinctive call is an insistent and fairly abrupt 'pink', is heard throughout the year.[2]

Distribution and Population

Post-1983 AMLR filtered records relatively widely distributed across the region apart from the southern parts of Fleurieu Peninsula.[3]

Within the AMLR, populations have declined and have become more isolated in the southern MLR and Fleurieu Peninsula.[2] Once common in near suburban areas including Netherby and Belair (Sutton unpublished data, McGilp 1953, Baxter 1980, Paton unpublished).[2]

Habitat

Primary habitat is open woodland. Important habitat components appear to be standing dead trees, fallen logs, large Eucalypts or other tree species (preferably, but not essentially rough-barked) and areas of open ground.[2] A dense shrub layer appears to reduce habitat quality due to reduced access to the ground for foraging (Paton et al. 2004).[2]

Within the AMLR the preferred broad vegetation groups are Grassy Woodland, Mallee and Riparian.[3]

Biology and Ecology

Sedentary and territorial (Noske 1991, Higgins et al. 2001, Paton unpublished). Territories can be defended by physical fights and chasing of intruders (Higgins et al. 2001). During the breeding season boundaries between the territories of adjacent groups sometimes break down and individuals (including the breeding males) help at the nests of other breeding pairs, forming quintets and sometimes sextets at some nests (Noske 1991, Higgins et al. 2001).[2]

Territories vary greatly in size which may result from a range of factors, such as group size and habitat conditions (Noske 1991; Rogers 1998). For example, territories have been found to range from 6.8 ha to 20.5 ha and this difference was significantly correlated with group size (Noske 1991).[2]

Cooperative breeders but can successfully breed as pairs (Noske 1991, Walters et al. 1999). Group size is generally tow to four individuals but can be as high as eight (Higgins et al. 2001). Males are philopatric serving

Further information:
Biodiversity Conservation Unit, Adelaide Region
Phone: (61 8) 8336 0901 Fax: (61 8) 8336 0999
http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/

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as helpers before generally inheriting their natal territory or gaining a new territory through the subdivision of their natal territory (Noske 1991, Walters et al. 1999).[2]

Breeding period generally between July and February, with the peak of egg laying occurring August to September (Noske 1991, Higgins et al. 2001). Hollow-nesters (tree trunks, stumps, spouts or branches, fence posts and artificial hollows). Clutch size of two to three eggs (Higgins et al. 2001). Female incubates eggs. Nestling period from 21-26 days, during which time the pair and any helpers feed the young (Noske 1991). Fledglings are fed by the group for 30-40 days before they become independent (Noske 1991).[2]

Probably multi-brooders, nesting again after both failure and success (Noske 1991, Walters et al. 1999).[2] Females disperse more frequently than males and over longer distances. In the Armidale area (NSW), male dispersal was found to be rare with 87% of males remaining on their natal territory (Cooper 2000, Cooper and Walters 2002). Relatively sedentary birds not appearing to have major seasonal changes in populations.[2]

Very active birds frequenting the ground, trunks and branches of both live and dead trees.[2]

Mostly insectivorous, with ants being an important component of the diet (Lea and Gray 1936, Noske 1979).[2] Mainly glean food from trunks of trees and the ground (Noske 1979, Ford et al. 1986, Walters et al. 1999). Noske (1979) found they foraged 42% of the time on the ground and the rest of their foraging (58%) was on the trunks and large boughs of trees.[2]

Aboriginal Significance

Post-1983 records indicate the AMLR distribution occurs in all Aboriginal Nations - Kaurna, Ngadjuri, Nganguraku, Ngarrindjeri and Peramangk.[3]

Threats

Habitat loss, degradation or fragmentation are likely to be the main reasons for decline. Habitat modification is an ongoing threat. Loss of standing and fallen dead trees and logs reduces important foraging areas.[2]

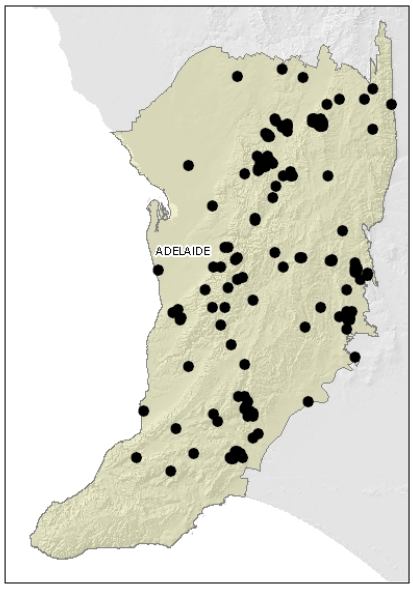
Fire does not appear to be a particular threat as they benefit from the more open habitat created and the increased productivity often associated with burnt areas (Porter and Henderson 1983; Turner 1992). However, intense wildfires may destroy fallen logs and standing dead trees.[2]

Shrubby weed species are likely to reduce the foraging habitat quality of vegetation, especially when the weeds are dense and cover large areas.[2]

Competition with other more abundant and aggressive birds (in particular Starlings and Rainbow Lorikeets) for nesting hollows may be an important reason for inadequate recruitment (D. Armstrong *pers. comm.*).

Additional current direct threats have been identified and rated for this species. Refer to the main plan accompanying these profiles.

Regional Distribution



Map based on filtered post-1983 records.[3] Note, this map does not necessarily represent the actual species' distribution within the AMLR.

References

Note: In some cases original reference sources are not included in this list, however they can be obtained from the reference from which the information has been sourced (the reference cited in superscript).

1 Armstrong, D. M., Croft, S. N. and Foulkes, J. N. (2003). *A Biological Survey of the Southern Mount Lofty Ranges, South Australia, 2000-2001*. Department for Environment and Heritage, South Australia.

2 Cale, B. (2005). *Towards a Recovery Plan for the Declining Birds of the Mount Lofty Ranges*. Scientific Resource Document for Birds for Biodiversity. Unpublished Report.

3 Department for Environment and Heritage (2007). *Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Regional Recovery Pilot Project Database*. Unpublished data extracted and edited from BDBSA, SA Herbarium (July 2007) and other sources.

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