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WESTERN GROUND PARROT INTERIM RECOVERY PLAN

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ANNUAL REPORT

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WESTERN GROUND PARROT INTERIM RECOVERY PLAN

Summary

Progress on each of the recovery actions in 2000 was as follows:

1. Firebreaks were maintained as in previous years.
2. Predator control (fox baiting) has continued at known Ground Parrot sites.
3. Dieback hygiene measures have been enforced at all known Ground Parrot sites.
4. No progress has been made on vesting of land in the Manypeaks area.
5. At least one population appears to have increased in size. However, surveys carried out in the Cape Arid National Park area with the assistance of Birds Australia Western Australia failed to locate and Ground Parrots.
6. Survey was attempted in the Denmark area, but windy and rainy conditions prevented the collection of data.
7. Captive breeding and translocation not relevant at present time.
8. Recovery Plan to be finalised in 2001.

WESTERN GROUND PARROT INTERIM RECOVERY PLAN

Annual report, January 2001

Recovery Actions

1. Fire management

Work done under this plan has included firebreak maintenance in the vicinity of known populations of Ground Parrots. Fortunately, no wildfires have occurred in the vicinity of known Ground Parrot locations since the summer of 1997-98 (see Burbidge (1998) for discussion of the possible effects of this fire).

2. Predator control

Predator control (fox baiting) has continued at FRNP, Cape Arid National Park and in the Manypeaks/Waychinicup area. It is not known what effect this is having, but numbers of birds at the Short Road site appear to be increasing (see below).

3. Dieback hygiene

Dieback hygiene measures have been enforced at all sites during the life of this plan.

4. Vesting of land in Manypeaks area

No progress has been made on this issue.

5. Documentation of known populations and monitoring of trends in population size/boundaries

Short Road, Fitzgerald River National Park

Part of this site was burnt in the extensive wildfires of summer 1989-90. Part of the same area was again burnt in summer of 1997-98.

A.H. Burbidge, J. Rolfe, S. McNee and B. Newbey surveyed this site in May 2000. The abundance of Ground Parrots was monitored by recording the number and direction of all Ground Parrot calls heard at permanently marked listening sites that had been set up in May 1996. Listening was carried out in 1996, 1998 and 2000 as shown in the following table. In each year, some listening was carried out in the recently burned area and some in the long-unburnt area. Some early data were presented in Burbidge (1999).

Year	morning	evening
1996	9	9
1998	7	7
2000	9	8

Not all these sampling events are comparable because (1) in 1996 some experimentation was carried out to determine an optimal sampling and recording regime and (2) weather conditions

varied between days within and between sampling periods. Because of such difficulties, detailed comparisons are difficult to do and yet to be made, but a preliminary examination of data suggests that the population is increasing at the site.

Figure 1 is an uncorrected average of counts at all sampling points (burnt and unburnt) at this site. The frequency of calling has been increasing steadily at this site from 1996 to 2000. Fire prevention measures, predator control and dieback hygiene measures are in place at this site.

It was the opinion of each observer that the 2000 data represented the highest frequency they had heard at this site or any other site in Western Australia. Experience at this particular site goes back at least 10 years for each of the four observers involved in the 2000 monitoring.

It is not possible at this stage to draw further conclusions in relation to densities of birds because the possible influences of weather conditions and nearby fire have not yet been investigated. However, the results do indicate that (1) with effort, monitoring of Ground Parrots under the conditions encountered in Fitzgerald River National Park is both feasible and useful and (2) Ground Parrots can occur in relatively high density in vegetation unburnt for 37+ years. The data are being analysed in more detail to provide a better understanding of the effect of fire and population recovery following fire, and to determine the most efficient monitoring protocol.

NE part of Fitzgerald River National Park

As noted in previous reports, this area was burnt in an extensive wildfire during summer 1997-98. It is considered that there are now no Ground Parrots remaining in this area.

Drummond Track, Fitzgerald River National Park

Not surveyed this year.

Waychinicup / Manypeaks

The Friends of the Ground Parrot group conducted limited surveys in this area in 2000 on a volunteer basis. Ground Parrots are known to persist at the site, but the data are not sufficiently detailed to allow an assessment of population trend.

Cape Arid National Park

A survey was carried out by Birds Australia Western Australia, with financial support from the Threatened Species Network and World Wide Fund for Nature and in-kind support from CALM. Results of the survey have been published (McNee 2000). No Ground Parrots were found during this survey. The reasons for this are unknown. It may be that the population has declined, shifted, or dispersed. It is unlikely that the population has declined, as there is no apparent reason that it should. It is more likely that the birds have moved. When the birds were detected in the park in the mid-1980s they were confined to a small island of long-unburnt vegetation in an extensive 'sea' of recently burnt vegetation. The only fires in this area since that time have been small in extent. Now, about 15 years after the extensive wildfires, there is an extensive area of heath that is apparently suitable for Ground Parrots. If they have dispersed through this approximately 15 year old vegetation, they could be quite difficult to detect.

6. Survey of areas possibly suitable for Western Ground Parrots

Survey was attempted in the Lowlands area near Denmark, but windy and rainy conditions prevented the collection of data.

7. Taking birds for captive breeding or translocation

Taking of birds for captive breeding or translocation is not intended in the life of this plan.

8. Recovery plan

Writing of a recovery plan has commenced and is scheduled for completion in 2001.

References

- Burbidge, A. H. 1998. Possible effects of recent fires on Western Ground Parrots. *Eclectus* 4: 15-16.
- Burbidge, A.H. 1999. Western Ground Parrot Interim Recovery Plan. [summary of progress] *Eclectus* 6: 23-26.
- McNee, S. (2000) Search for the Western Ground Parrot in Cape Arid National Park and nearby areas. June 1999 to June 2000. *Western Australian Bird Notes*, Supplement No. 6.

Figure caption:

Figure 1: Calling frequency at one site in Fitzgerald River National Park, 1996 – 2000.

Figure 1: Ground Parrot calls

