

Black-throated Finch

Poephila cincta (Gould, 1837)

Other common names Black-throat, Black-rumped, Black-tailed or Parson Finch

Conservation status

The Black-throated Finch is listed as an **Endangered Species** on Schedule 1 of the *Threatened Species Conservation Act, 1995* (TSC Act).

Description (summarised from Pizzey 1991; Rowland 1996)

Length

103-129mm

Wing

60-63mm

Tail

36-49mm

Bill

12-14.3mm

Tarsus

14.4-15.4mm

Weight

11.5-17g

The Black-throated Finch has a black throat, upper breast and tail. The head of this small grass finch is blue-grey with the back, wings and belly predominately fawn-brown. Although the female has a slightly smaller black throat patch, it is similar to the male.

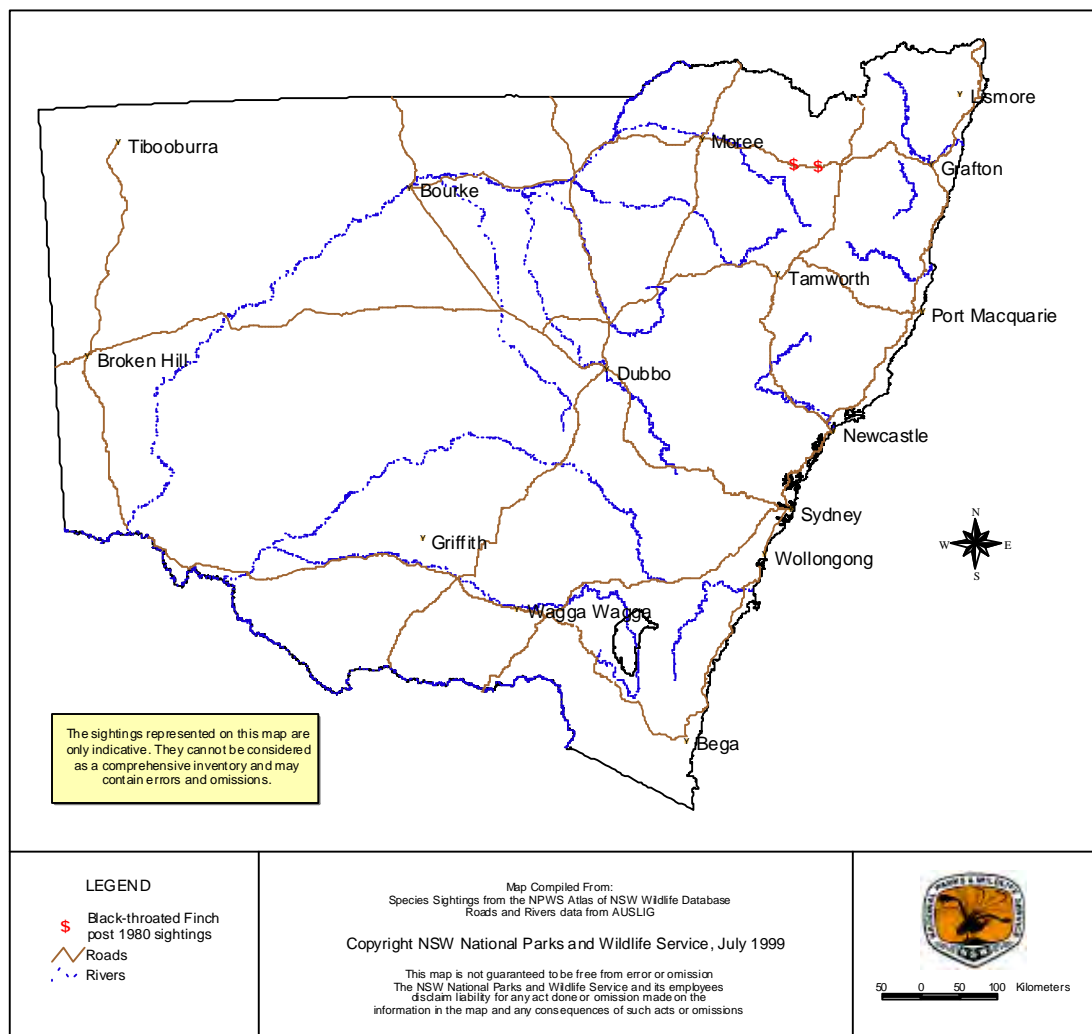
The Black-throated Finch calls in a loud, slightly harsh whistle *tweer* and a softer *tet*. Whilst in song, the species forms a series of phrases with soft flute-like whistles.

Distribution

The nomadic Black-throated Finch once ranged from near Inverell in northern NSW to Cape York in Queensland (Garnett 1992). This small, grass finch has disappeared from the southern two-thirds of its range.



G Chapman



NPWS records of the Black-throated Finch in NSW

Within NSW, the species has a patchy distribution with only five records since the mid 1960s, all in the southern part of the New England Tablelands, in the north-east of the state (Morris *et al.* 1981; Garnett 1992).

Recorded occurrences in conservation reserves

This species has not been recorded in any conservation reserves in NSW (NPWS 1999).

Habitat

The Black-throated Finch occupies woodland savannah and riverine vegetation (Slater *et al.* 1986). The preferred inland habitat is grassy woodlands, dominated by seeding grasses, *Eucalyptus*, *Melaleuca* or

Acacia, with access to water (Zann 1975). Nearer to the coast, the species has been recorded in open grassy plains with pandanus (Pizzey 1991).

Ecology

The Black-throated Finch may forage on the ground for seeds from various species of grasses or may remove seeds directly from the spike (Rowland 1996). Flying insects, spiders and ants also form part of the species diet (Schodde & Tidemann 1988). Flocks are generally social often drinking, bathing and nesting together (Rowland 1996).

The species usually occurs in small flocks of up to 30 birds (Zann 1975; Rowland 1996). These flocks can be difficult to census as they may move long distances in response to climatic conditions (McCutcheon 1976).

Although breeding may occur throughout the year, in the north the main season is autumn and in the south, spring (Schodde & Tidemann 1988). Pair bonds are permanent and mates greet each other with head bobbing and cackling. Individuals are diurnal, roosting during the night in bottle shaped nests with a long entrance tunnel located on the outer twigs of *Eucalypts* in tree hollows, termite mounds or at the base of a Hawk's nest. Nests are constructed of dried grass and may be lined with feathers and charcoal (Pizzey 1991). Both parents incubate 4 to 9 white eggs and share the brooding and feeding of the young (Schodde & Tidemann 1988).

Threats (summarised from Garnett 1992)

- Degradation of habitat - overgrazing by sheep and rabbits
- Illegal trapping may have caused the extinction of some remnant populations
- Loss of habitat - particularly removal of native grasslands due to inappropriate fire
- Finch virus is a possible threat
- Combined pressure of habitat alteration by drought and overgrazing

Management (summarised from Garnett 1992)

- Protection and maintenance of known or potential habitat, particularly creek-side grasslands within the species range
- Location of recent sightings kept confidential to protect the species from illegal trapping
- Implementation of a program for habitat restoration and reintroduction of birds bred in captivity

Recovery plans

A recovery plan has not been prepared for the species.

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