



# Flock Bronzewing

*Phaps histrionica* (Gould, 1841)

**Other common names** Flock Pigeon, Harlequin Bronzewing

## Conservation status

The Flock Bronzewing is listed as an **Endangered Species** on Schedule 1 of the New South Wales *Threatened Species Conservation Act, 1995* (TSC Act).

**Description** (summarised from Higgins & Davies 1996)

*Length*  
280-310mm  
*Wing*  
200-208mm  
*Tail*  
79-87mm  
*Bill*  
17-18mm

*Tarsus*  
27-30mm  
*Weight*  
300g

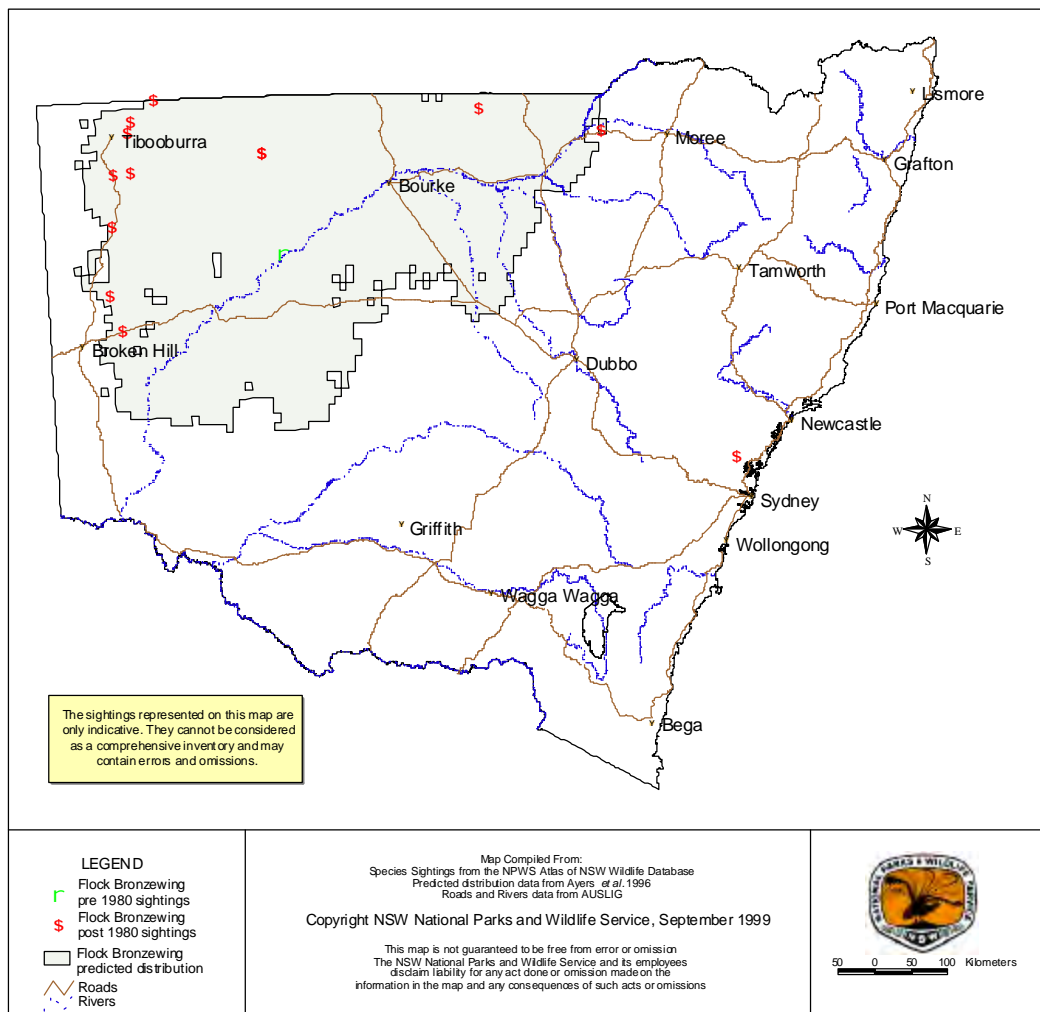
The Flock Bronzewing is a plump medium-sized pigeon. The species has a short rounded tail and long pointed wings. The adult male is generally sandy brown above and blue grey below with a distinctive black and white head and neck. Females are duller with generally the same patterning.

The Flock Bronzewing is usually silent, but a very soft *cooo* can be heard from flocks on the ground. When displaying, the adult male may vocalise with a *wok*.



G.Chapman

Flock Bronzewing



NPWS records of the Flock Bronzewing in NSW

### Distribution

The Flock Bronzewing is endemic to Australia occurring mostly in arid, tropical inland areas. The species has a patchy distribution through north-western Western Australia, central-southern Northern Territory, western Queensland, north-eastern South Australia and north-western NSW (Higgins & Davies 1996).

Though formally abundant in NSW, the Flock Bronzewing is now rare having almost disappeared from the Murray-Darling region (McAllan 1996). Recent records indicate that the species is most likely to occur north of Broken Hill and west of Cobar when conditions are suitable (Ayers *et al.* 1996).

### Recorded occurrences in conservation reserves

Dharug NP, Sturt NP (NPWS 1999).

### Habitat

The highly nomadic Flock Bronzewing ranges throughout open woodland and treeless grass plains across northern Australia (Higgins & Davies 1996). Within NSW, the species was originally found in large numbers on the short grassy plains of temperate northern NSW and the saltbush plains of the Riverina. The grassland plains that now hold the core populations of Flock Bronzewings are the Mitchell Grass plains of the Barkly Tableland, Northern Territory.

Similar habitat areas in NSW have been substantially changed by agricultural and pastoral use and may no longer be able to support populations of the species (Smith *et al.* 1995).

Although usually rare, recent records indicate that this species responds dramatically to favourable climatic conditions. Excellent seasons around Broken Hill in 1992/93 stimulated abundant growth of tussock grasses which attracted thousands of Flock Bronzewings to the area (Ayers *et al.* 1995).

### **Ecology**

The Flock Bronzewing is a large terrestrial pigeon. Formerly recorded in huge flocks, it has declined Australia-wide following European settlement (Pizzey 1991).

During the day, the species rests on the ground in tussock grassland (Ayers *et al.* 1995). Nesting occurs on the ground in the cover of a bush, low branch, grass tussock or in the dusty, bare ground around bores (Higgins & Davies 1996).

The Flock Bronzewing feeds on seeds of grasses and herbaceous plants, however, seeds may also be collected from cattle dung (McAllan 1996). Both parents incubate a clutch of 2 for a period of 16 days and share the care for the young (Frith *et al.* 1976).

### **Threats**

- Modification/degradation of habitat, through conversion of undisturbed habitat to pasture and agriculture
- Degradation of habitat due to overgrazing by stock and rabbits
- Widespread establishment of watering points for stock has led to the flocks being more sedentary, resulting in a decline in numbers
- Domestic stock trampling and destroying nests
- Predation by foxes and feral cats

### **Management**

- Further research to assess appropriate management of potential habitat
- Assessment of the effects on the population due to an increase in watering points
- Control of introduced animals, particularly after high rainfall when breeding is likely to occur
- Protection of breeding and nesting habitat from stock

### **Recovery plans**

A recovery plan has not been prepared for the species.

## References

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