

Squatter Pigeon

Geophaps scripta (Temminck, 1821)

Other common names Partridge Bronzewing or Squatter, Partridge Pigeon

Conservation status

The Squatter Pigeon 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

260-320mm

Wingspan

450mm

Tail

90-110mm

Bill

14-15.5mm

Tarsus

29-32mm

Weight

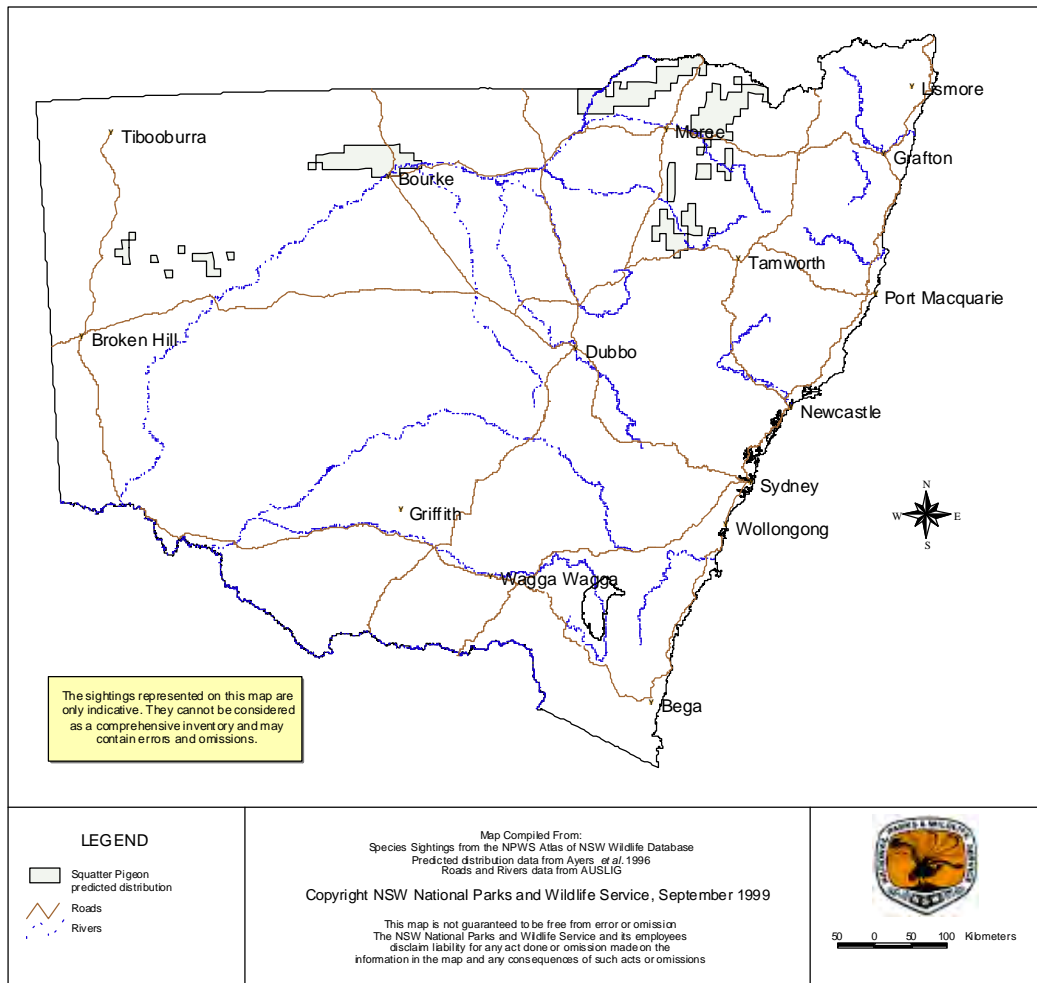
200-225g

The Squatter Pigeon is a medium-sized, heavily built, ground-dwelling pigeon. The species has a short tail, long legs and a conspicuous black-and-white facial pattern. Brown plumage, paler below, covers most of the body. Darker brown patterning is apparent and the end of the tail is dark brown.

The flight of the species is fast, with rapid wing-beats interrupted by glides on stiff, downcurved wings. Squatter Pigeons call in a soft *oop-oop-oop* and a harsh, abrupt and higher *coo*.



G Chapman



NPWS records of the Squatter Pigeon in NSW

Distribution

The Squatter Pigeon was once common and widespread nationally (Higgins & Davies 1996). The range once extended from southern NSW to the Burdekin River in northern Queensland, occurring over most of NSW.

At present, the Squatter Pigeon is widespread in the north-east and north of the Queensland. Within NSW, records of the species are concentrated on the north-western slopes, specifically Bourke and Cobar, near Louth west of White Cliffs and 150km NNE of Broken Hill (Higgins and Davies 1996).

However, since 1975 there have only been nine records of the Squatter Pigeon in NSW. The most recent sighting, although unconfirmed, was made in 1989 from Hillston, north of Griffith (Morris 1993).

Recorded occurrences in conservation reserves

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

Habitat

The Squatter Pigeon ranges in tropical, open, dry sclerophyll woodlands and, savannahs of north-eastern Australia (Higgins & Davies 1996).

Sightings are generally in the grassy understorey of eucalypt woodland, close to permanent water bodies (Garnett 1992). Nests are located on the ground, sometimes among, or sheltered by vegetation, including short, dry grass, grass tussocks or bushes (Frith 1982).

Ecology

The ground dwelling Squatter Pigeon forages on a wide range of seeds from grasses, legumes, herbs, trees and shrubs, as well as insects (Higgins & Davies 1996). The species diet may vary seasonally depending on food availability. Drinking occurs every day, usually in the morning (Crome 1976).

Nests are usually shallow depressions in the ground, lined with grass and leaves (Frith 1982). Breeding is greatly influenced by heavy rainfall and a clutch, generally of 2 eggs, incubated for a period of 15-17 days (Higgins & Davies 1996).

Threats (summarised from Garnett 1992)

- Loss of habitat, particularly woodland clearing to allow for agricultural activities

- Degradation of habitat through overgrazing by sheep and rabbits, combined with drought, has caused regional and local extinctions
- Trampling of nests by stock
- Predation by foxes and cats: eating of eggs by snakes and iguanas
- Shooting for game by humans

Management (summarised from Garnett 1992)

- Protection and maintenance of known or potential habitat, particularly during breeding seasons
- Further research into the species ecological requirements
- Control of feral animals around potential habitat areas

Recovery plans

A recovery plan has not been prepared for the Squatter Pigeon.

References

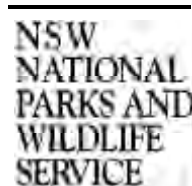
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