



The Threatened Species Network is a community-based program of the Australian Government and WWF-Australia.

Management of yellow chat (Capricorn subspecies) – habitat and identification of range on the mainland

THREATENED SPECIES NETWORK COMMUNITY GRANTS PROFILE



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Birds Australia in partnership with Central Queensland University and with the assistance of a Threatened Species Network Community grant, aimed to build on previous conservation and research activities for the critically endangered Capricorn subspecies of the yellow chat. The Capricorn subspecies was thought to survive only on Curtis Island, until during a previous TSN-funded project, BA and CQU discovered six additional mainland sites and increased the estimated total population from forty birds to around three hundred. This project aimed to identify the subspecies' mainland range and distribution, their habitat preferences and management needs; and to raise community awareness and involvement in the monitoring of yellow chat populations and habitat.



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Yellow chat (Capricorn subspecies) *Epthianura crocea macgregori* – previously known as Dawson subspecies

Commonwealth Status: Critically endangered (EPBC Act 1999)
Queensland Status: Endangered (Nature Conservation Act 1992)

Yellow chats have a dark golden-yellow crown, an olive back, and a dark golden-yellow rump. They like the tall grasses and sedges along braided waterways on marine plains. Yellow chats are threatened by modifications to their habitat such as flow reductions including the construction of barriers (dams, levee banks or ponded pastures). Grazing and trampling by feral pigs and cattle also threaten some important breeding and shelter sites.

Project outcomes

This project identified a further three sites where the chats exist, further expanding their known range. More than thirty surveys held during the project have greatly increased knowledge of the preferred breeding habitat and dry season refugia of this subspecies. This increased understanding has also contributed to an assessment of potential habitat, and a number of sites have been identified for future investigation.

Community awareness of the subspecies has been raised through the installation of signs, workshops, working with local birdwatching groups, and meeting with landholders to discuss management principles and ongoing surveys.

As a result of this project, protocols for monitoring chat populations and habitat; guidelines for land managers wishing to promote yellow chat conservation on their properties; and a draft recovery plan for the yellow chat Capricorn subspecies have been developed. Annual monitoring of known breeding sites will be continued into the future.

Outputs

Area surveyed: 80 sites along the QLD coast

Volunteers participated: 20

Person days worked: 136

Products

- Interpretive sign
- Yellow Chat brochure
- Paper published in Sunbird (journal of the Queensland Ornithological Society)
- Articles in Birds Australia newsletters

Expenditure

TSN grant funds - \$15,633.20

Proponent - \$63,633.60

Total project - \$79,266.80

Australian Government Department of Environment and Heritage website: <http://www.deh.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/species/dawson-yellow-chat.html>

Birds Australia (2006) Final report to the TSN on "Management of Yellow Chat (Capricorn subspecies) Habitat and Identification of Range on the Mainland" (TSN reference QLD06/104)

Birds Australia (2005) Final report to the TSN on "Identification of other populations of Yellow Chat (Dawson sub-species) and mapping of suitable habitat on the mainland" (TSN reference QLD09/103)

Houston, W., Elder, R., Black, R. and McCabe, J (2006) Conservation significance of coastal wetland habitats for birds at Twelve Mile Creek, Fitzroy River, Central Queensland. Sunbird 36: 20-36

Queensland Government Environment Protection Agency website:

http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/nature_conservation/wildlife/native_animals/yellow_chat_dawson/