

Turquoise parrot

Neophema pulchella



Photo: Chris Tzaros

Turquoise parrots were considered extinct in the wild by 1915 due to severe land clearing. The population began to recover by the 1920's. They had formerly been caught in large numbers for the cage bird industry and were also shot for food, as a pie-filling.

Description

Size: 19-21 cm

Plumage: The male turquoise parrot is very distinctive with bright green upper-parts and a turquoise-blue crown, face and shoulders, grading to deep blue at the flight-feathers. It has a chestnut-red patch on the upper-wing. The upper-breast of the has an orange tint, while the yellow abdomen may have an orange centre. Females and immature individuals are generally duller, have whitish lores, a green, rather than yellow throat and breast, and no red on the shoulder and upper-wing area.

Call: The call of the turquoise parrot in flight is a tinkling sound, while at other times it may emit a sharp "sit-sit" alarm call.



Photo: Chris Tzaros

Habitat

Turquoise parrots live on the edges of eucalypt woodland adjoining clearings, timbered ridges and creeks in farmland.

They are usually seen in pairs or small, possibly family, groups and have also been reported in flocks of up to thirty individuals.

Preferring to feed in the shade of a tree, these birds spend most of the day on the ground searching for the seeds or grasses and herbaceous plants, or browsing on vegetable matter. They forage quietly and may be quite tolerant of disturbance. However, if flushed they will fly to a nearby tree and then return to the ground to browse as soon as the danger has passed. Food supply can be negatively affected by livestock grazing.



Photo: Chris Tzaros

Turquoise parrots prefer to feed within 100 metres of the nest, but they can travel up to 1.4 kilometres away in search of food and water.



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Breeding

Nests in tree hollows, logs or posts, often within 1-2 metres of the ground. Hollows average about 50 cm deep, with an entrance hole of 10 x 7 cm.

Clutches of usually four to five eggs are laid in spring and summer, with multiple attempts per season.

The incubation period is about 18 days, and the nestling period is about four weeks. Once fledged, juveniles will remain with their parents and continue to be fed by the male while the female starts a second clutch.

Breeding pairs will defend a nest site and small feeding area against other turquoise parrots. There can be four to seven breeding pairs per hectare.

Distribution

The turquoise parrot occurs mainly on the western side of the tablelands, inland slopes and adjoining plains in the eastern half of NSW, and in some dry coastal valleys (especially in the Sydney Basin),

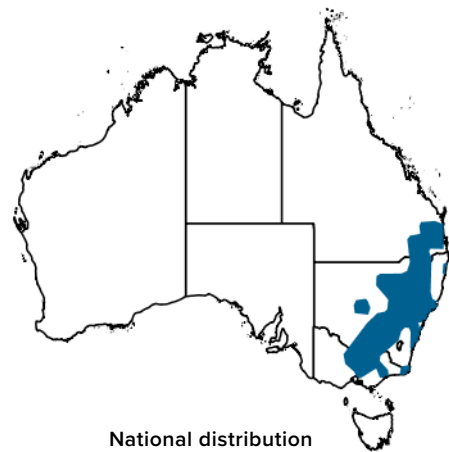
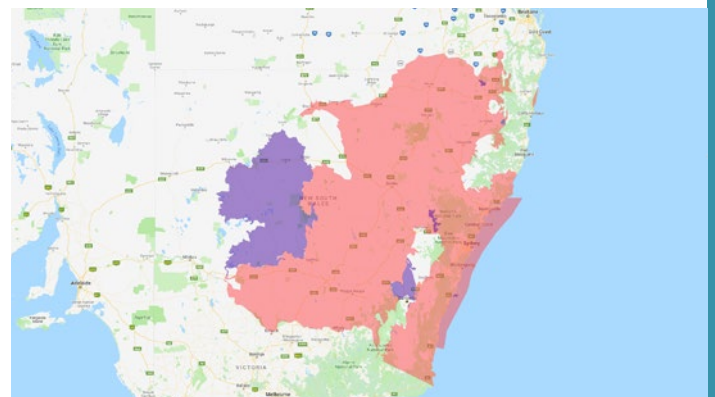


Photo: Chris Tzaros



NSW occurrence: Pink = Known, Purple = Predicted.
(Office of Environment and Heritage)

Conservation status

In NSW, the species is listed as Vulnerable.

Threats

- Clearing of grassy-woodland and open forest habitat.
- Loss of hollow-bearing trees.
- Degradation of habitat through heavy grazing, firewood collection and establishment of exotic pastures.
- Predation by foxes and cats.
- Illegal trapping of birds and collection of eggs which also often results in the destruction of hollows.
- Inappropriate fire regimes.
- Aggressive exclusion by Noisy Miners.
- Climate change impacts including reduction in resources due to drought.

Activities to assist this species

- Undertake fox and feral cat control programs in key habitat areas.
- Retain areas of open woodland with grassy understorey and adjoining grassland.
- Protect hollow-bearing trees for nest sites. Younger mature trees should also be retained to provide replacements for the older trees when they eventually die and fall over.
- Protect sites where turquoise parrots forage and nest from heavy, prolonged grazing.
- Report suspected illegal bird trapping, egg collection or sales.

In 2009, the NSW Scientific Committee estimated the population of turquoise parrots at 20,000 breeding birds, with about 18,000 birds occurring in NSW.



Photo: Chris Tzaros