

ACTION PLAN No. 20

In accordance with section 21 of the *Nature Conservation Act 1980*, the **Regent Honeyeater (*Xanthomyza phrygia*)** was declared an endangered species on 19 May 1997 (formerly Instrument No. 89 of 1997 and currently Instrument No. 192 of 1998). Section 23 of the Act requires the Conservator of Flora and Fauna to prepare an Action Plan in response to each declaration. This is the Action Plan for the:

Regent Honeyeater *Xanthomyza phrygia*

Preamble

The *Nature Conservation Act 1980* establishes the ACT Flora and Fauna Committee with responsibilities for assessing the conservation status of the ACT's flora and fauna and the ecological significance of potentially threatening processes. Where the Committee believes that a species or ecological community is threatened with extinction or a process is an ecological threat, it is required to advise the responsible Minister and recommend that a declaration be made accordingly.

Flora and Fauna Committee assessments are made on nature conservation grounds only and are guided by specified criteria as set out in its publication "*Threatened Species and Communities in the ACT* July 1995".

In making its assessment of the Regent Honeyeater, the Committee concluded that it satisfied the criteria indicated in the adjacent table.

An Action Plan is required in response to each declaration. It must include proposals for the identification, protection and survival of a threatened species or ecological community, or, in the case of a threatening process, proposals to minimise its effect.

This Action Plan was prepared by the Conservator of Flora and Fauna in accordance with the requirements of the Nature Conservation Act, in consultation with the Flora and Fauna Committee and after the statutory period for public comment.

While the legal authority of this Action Plan is confined to the Australian Capital Territory, management considerations are addressed in a regional context.

Criteria Satisfied

- 1.1 The species is known or suspected to occur in the ACT region and is already recognised as endangered in an authoritative international or national listing.
- 1.2 The species is observed, estimated, inferred or suspected to be at risk of premature extinction in the ACT region in the near future, as demonstrated by:
 - 1.2.1 Current severe decline in population or distribution from evidence based on:
 - 1.2.1.1 Direct observation, including comparison of historical and current records.
 - 1.2.1.3 Severe decline in quality and quantity of habitat.
 - 1.2.6 Extremely small population.

Links with Other Action Plans

Measures proposed in this Action Plan complement those proposed in the Action Plan for Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland (Action Plan No. 10) and in the Action Plans for other threatened birds in the ACT (Action Plan Nos. 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19). Action Plans are listed at the end of this document.

Species Description and Ecology

DESCRIPTION

The Regent Honeyeater *Xanthomyza phrygia* (Shaw 1794) is one of the most spectacular of Australia's honeyeaters (Family Meliphagidae) (Figure 1). Adult birds are 200 to 220 mm in length and weigh between 35 and 45 grams. The head is black with yellowish orange warty facial skin that extends over and around the eye. The back and breast are pale lemon scaled in black. The wings are black with conspicuous yellow patches. The tail is also black with prominent yellow edging. The sexes are similar, with males slightly larger. Juveniles are smaller, duller and browner than adults. The species is generally unmistakable, but several species of smaller honeyeaters have yellow patches on the wings.

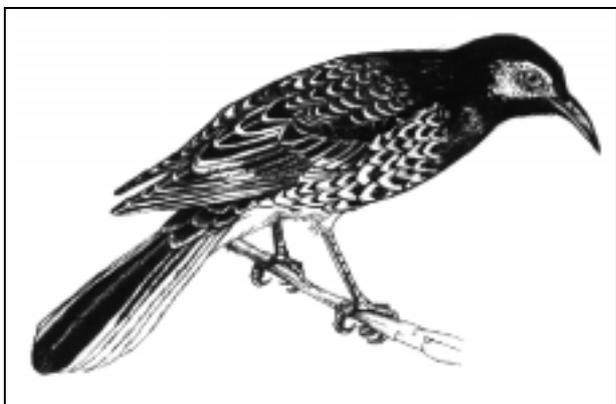


Figure 1: Regent Honeyeater (*Xanthomyza phrygia*).

Scale: Approximately two-fifths actual size.

DISTRIBUTION

Historically, the range of *X. phrygia* extended from the Mount Lofty Ranges and Kangaroo Island in South Australia, through the forests and woodlands on both sides of the Great Dividing Range in Victoria and New South Wales and into Queensland, rarely as far north as Byfield near Rockhampton (Blakers *et al.* 1984; Schodde and Tidemann 1986).

During compilation of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union's (RAOU) national field atlas, the species was only recorded in 38 of 812 one degree blocks, with breeding recorded in 12 (Blakers *et al.* 1984; Garnett 1992).

The ACT region lies at the maximum altitudinal limit of *X. phrygia*'s distribution (Taylor and Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG) 1992). Records dating back to 1966 from the database of COG, and in its journal *Canberra Bird Notes*, show a preference for woodlands containing the Yellow Box *Eucalyptus melliodora* and Blakely's Red

Gum *E. blakelyi* along the lower slopes of Mounts Ainslie and Majura, and extending through Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve to the Sutton and Lake George area (Figure 2). The preference for this area was also shown by Taylor and COG (1992) during surveys for the *Atlas of Birds in the ACT* conducted from September 1986 to August 1989. Most, but not all, records of local breeding come from this area.

In the ACT region, the species used to be fairly common and was recorded in areas where it is now rarely observed, such as on the slopes of Black Mountain and along the Murrumbidgee River. Other favoured localities appear to include the Australian National Botanic Gardens and the Australian National University and perhaps Mulligans Flat. There are records from Yellow Box/Red Gum woodlands in the Tharwa and Castle Hill area. There are also records from woodlands near Mitchell, around the Gungahlin homestead and surrounding area, and from the former quarries south-east of Canberra airport.

The species has also been recorded in suburban gardens throughout Canberra and in areas where many species of eucalypts and other Australian flora have been grown in plantation-like settings.

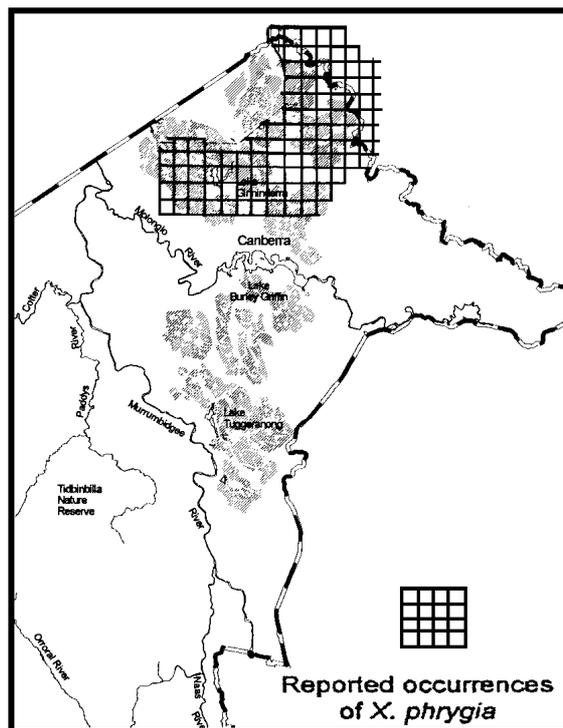


Figure 2: Location of occurrences of *X. phrygia* in the ACT, redrawn from Taylor & COG (1992).

To the north of the ACT, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NSW NPWS) recorded the species during the spring and early summer of 1998, in Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland on a roadside reserve and adjacent grazing land south of Gunning. This record was of three birds.

ABUNDANCE

Early this century *X. phrygia* was considered abundant, at least in some localities; for example, the White Box *E. albens* woodlands of the upper Hunter River area, where it was regularly observed, at times in 'thousands' (White 1909). However, White Box woodland is one habitat that has been especially selected for clearing because of the high quality of its soils (Spencer and Barrow 1963; Prober and Thiele 1995).

Peters (1979) was the first to show evidence of a decline in the species. In the past two to three decades it has declined greatly in numbers and disappeared from parts of its range (Blakers *et al.* 1984; Longmore 1991; Garnett 1993). The species is no longer found in South Australia (Franklin and Menkhorst 1988), or western Victoria, where it has declined to vagrant status (Franklin *et al.* 1989; Schedvin 1995).

X. phrygia is now only found regularly at a few localities in Victoria (Chiltern district, Killawarra State Forest, Benalla district and the north-eastern fringe of Melbourne) and NSW (Warrumbungle National Park, Bundarra district, Mudgee district and the Capertee Valley near Bathurst) (Emison *et al.* 1987; Webster and Menkhorst 1992; DCE 1994). Currently, the western slopes of the Great Dividing Range in NSW north to about Armidale appear to be its stronghold (Ley 1990; Ley and Williams 1992; Webster and Menkhorst 1992), although certain locations are favoured, such as Capertee Valley and Bundarra. Breeding numbers in excess of 150 were recorded in the Capertee Valley, the largest concentration of these birds recorded for many years (D. Geering pers. comm.).

With a reporting rate of one to four birds a year, the species was listed as a rare breeding summer visitor in the ACT during surveys for the *Atlas of Birds in the ACT* (Taylor and COG 1992).

The decline of the species nationally is thought to have begun in the 1920s (Blakers *et al.* 1984; Garnett 1992). Records of COG and its predecessor, the ACT branch of the RAOU, compiled from 1964, show a decline in the numbers visiting the ACT.

From 1964 to 1969 the species was regularly reported in small numbers, with one record of two flocks of twenty. No birds were recorded from 1969 to 1974. From 1974 to the present, the species was generally only recorded as single birds or occasional pairs until the summer of 1995 when the species was again recorded in small flocks. In that year at least five birds were noted on Black Mountain Peninsula and four pairs bred in the North Watson area. It is not known if these records are of the same birds. These records coincided with sightings from many locations nationally, indicating that the birds had dispersed (D. Geering pers. comm.).

HABITAT

X. phrygia generally inhabits drier temperate woodlands and open forests, including forest edges, wooded farmland and sometimes urban areas with mature eucalypts. It is an arboreal nectarivore that apparently relies on locally abundant nectar and associated insect sources, especially flowering eucalypts that occur mainly in dry open woodland. Results from studies on the specialised dietary preferences of *X. phrygia* show a strong association with box - ironbark woodland communities (Franklin *et al.* 1989; Webster and Menkhorst 1992; DCE 1994). Movements within an area coincide with the flowering of several species of eucalypt, especially Mugga Ironbark *Eucalyptus sideroxylon*, White Box *E. albens*, Yellow Box *E. melliodora*, Yellow Gum *E. leucoxylon*, Red Box *E. polyanthemos*, and River Red Gum *E. camaldulensis*.

In riparian areas in NSW, the birds also use River Oak *Casuarina cunninghamiana*, where the trees are heavily infested with the Needle-leaved Mistletoe *Amyema cambagei*. In coastal areas of NSW, Swamp Mahogany *E. robusta* is an important source of nectar (Garnett 1992; 1993; Webster and Menkhorst 1992). These tree species generally grow in areas of higher soil fertility.

In the local region *X. phrygia* has been recorded in naturally occurring flowering Yellow Box and Blakely's Red Gum, and in various species of eucalypts and grevilleas planted in urban areas. The majority of records are from Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodlands in the northern parts of the ACT but several are also from areas of planted Argyle Apple *E. cinerea* (Allan 1989; Taylor and COG 1992). The most recent breeding records are of four pairs on the lowest western slopes of Mount Majura bordering Antill Street in Watson, in late 1995 and early 1996 (Bounds *et al.* 1996; M. Clayton pers. comm.). The vegetation of this area is chiefly Blakely's Red Gum and Yellow Box, both of which were in flower at the time. The birds

used flowering cultivated Mugga Ironbark nearby and were not recorded in the dry Red Stringybark *E. macrorhyncha* - Western Scribbly Gum *E. rossii* woodland higher up the slopes.

BEHAVIOUR AND BIOLOGY

X. phrygia is an irruptive and partly migratory species, generally moving northwards in autumn and winter, returning south to breed in spring, concentrating on flushes of blossoming. Franklin *et al.* (1989) stated that the movements of the species may be predictable, with birds returning to favoured areas. Hindwood (1939; 1944) also noted a regular seasonal movement into coastal areas during the autumn and winter, returning inland to the west of Sydney to breed once coastal *Banksia* species had finished flowering. Movements of birds to many areas away from core breeding areas may coincide with flowering of key eucalypt species.

In spring of 1995, seven of the eight *X. phrygia* nesting in Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland near North Watson were captured and colour banded. Subsequently, two of these birds were observed in the Capertee Valley, one in October 1997 and one in March 1998. These banding recoveries represent a significant movement, of 270 km.

Birds colour banded whilst breeding in the ACT, and 90 km north at Wollar, have been recorded breeding in the Capertee Valley (D. Geering pers. comm.). This suggests that the birds retreat to core areas such as Capertee Valley during poor flowering years.

The species generally breeds between August and January. It often nests in loose colonies but sometimes individual pairs have been recorded. The cup-shaped nest, of bark bound with cobweb and lined with finer material, is placed in the fork of a tree or clump of mistletoe at heights from one to 20 metres above the ground. One to three, usually two, eggs are laid and are incubated by the female. Nestlings are raised by both adults (Schodde and Tidemann 1986; Longmore 1991). Breeding has been recorded in the ACT region, although Wilson (1984) reports nesting is generally later - December to January - than elsewhere. Bounds *et al.* (1996) described successful breeding attempts of four pairs of *X. phrygia* nesting near North Watson in December-January. There was an unsuccessful breeding attempt recorded in September 1987 in Canberra (Taylor and COG 1992).

Conservation Status

X. phrygia is recognised as a threatened species in the following sources:

International

Endangered. - Collar *et al.* 1994.

Endangered. - IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals, Baillie and Groombridge 1996.

National

Endangered. - Schedule 1, Part 1 of the *Endangered Species Protection Act 1992* (Commonwealth)

Endangered. - ANZECC 1991

Endangered. - Garnett 1992; 1993.

Australian Capital Territory

Endangered. - Section 21 of the *Nature Conservation Act 1980*, Instrument No. 192 of 1998 (formerly Instrument No. 89 of 1997).

Special Protection Status Species. - Schedules 6 and 7 of the *Nature Conservation Act 1980*, Instrument No. 197 of 1998.

New South Wales

Endangered. - Schedule 1, Part 1 of the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*.

Victoria

Endangered. - Threatened Vertebrate Fauna in Victoria. Department of Natural Resources and Environment, 1998.

The species is also the subject of Action Statement No. 41, prepared by the Victorian Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

Queensland

Endangered. - *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

Threats

The principal cause of the dramatic reduction in the range of *X. phrygia* nationally, and extremely small population (now estimated to be 1000 - 1500 individuals (Franklin *et al.* 1987; Webster and Menkhurst 1992; RAOU 1994), is loss of its box woodland habitat.

Yellow Box has been identified as one of the key habitat species for *X. phrygia* (DCE 1994). Yellow Box grows on fertile soils on gently sloping foothills and plains and has suffered extensive clearing for agriculture and urban development.

Webster and Menkhorst (1992) found that *X. phrygia* prefers large emergent trees. Tree decline in agricultural and pastoral land has depleted the habitat quality of remnant stands.

This honeyeater appears to favour large, fully mature trees in the woodlands but mature stands are now rare and often harvested for fuelwood or the stands are fragmented.

Continued and extensive clearing of the Box-Ironbark woodlands west of the Great Dividing Range has drastically reduced the available and favoured habitat of the species (Garnett 1992; 1993; Longmore 1991). In coastal areas of NSW, urban development coupled with agriculture has also severely reduced the species preferred habitat, which includes Swamp Mahogany *E. botryoides* and Spotted Gum *E. maculata* (Hindwood 1939; 1944).

Grassy woodland habitat that *X. phrygia* uses was once widespread in the ACT region, but is now reduced and fragmented following clearing for agricultural and urban development. Tree dieback and weed invasion contribute to degradation of grassy woodland communities.

In the ACT region since European settlement, several major environmental changes have seriously disadvantaged *X. phrygia*. These are:

- **Clearing of native open forest and woodland**, particularly box woodlands; and
- **Urban development** - rapid spread of urban areas puts increasing pressure on remnant woodland patches; leading to.
- **Fragmentation, separation and degradation** of remaining viable habitat areas.

In the ACT, it is possible that only as little as 3-4% of the original extent of the Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodlands remains in something like its natural state (J. Landsberg pers. comm.). The current intact area of the adjoining White Box woodlands in NSW is considered to be less than 0.01% of its original extent (Prober and Thiele 1995).

Continuing threats to the species' woodland habitat include:

- **clearing of both living and dead trees** (for agricultural expansion, urban development and firewood collection);
- **grazing by livestock;**

- **rural tree dieback** (see Action Plan No 10 for discussion);
- **use of chemicals** such as fertilisers and pesticides; and
- **degradation of habitat** through inappropriate fire regimes.

It is the loss of woodland in the ACT part of the range of the species, and the steps to be taken to prevent further habitat degradation, that can be addressed in this Action Plan, in conjunction with the Action Plan for Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland (Action Plan No. 10).

Major Conservation Objectives

The main objective of this Action Plan is to support national and regional efforts to maintain in the long term, viable, wild populations of *X. phrygia* as components of the indigenous biological resources of Australia.

Implementation of conservation actions outlined in the Action Plan for Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland (Action Plan No.10) will be fundamental to making progress towards achievement of this objective. Other actions which will assist are:

- encouraging research, monitoring and experimental management programs aimed at identifying causes of population decline and preventing them;
- negotiating with rural lessees for cooperative management arrangements for major sites of conservation value on leased land. Much of the habitat of the species within the ACT region is found predominantly on private land;
- cooperating with surrounding shires in NSW for conservation of road reserves and travelling stock routes, as they contain a large number of suitable trees for the species; and
- increasing community awareness of the need to protect the species and its habitat.

The paucity of records of the species in high quality grassy woodland remnants, fragmented by agricultural and grazing land to the NW and NE of the ACT highlights the urgency of coordinated regional conservation action. It is a feature of agricultural areas in and surrounding the ACT that many remnants exist as isolated islands surrounded by highly modified grazing or cropping lands.

Conservation Issues and Intended Management Actions

The key to conservation of this species in the ACT region lies with the conservation of its principal habitat, the Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodlands (an endangered ecological community). *X. phrygia* is one of five bird species which inhabit these woodlands and are declared under the *Nature Conservation Act 1980* as threatened in the ACT region. Any management prescriptions aimed at enhancing the conservation status of these woodlands will be beneficial to their associated fauna.

The 1995 breeding episode at North Watson and breeding attempts at another northern ACT site emphasise the abundance of mature flowering eucalypts as being of significant habitat value to the species, irrespective of the structure and nature of the understorey.

Also important to conservation of this species are co-operation with regional and national recovery efforts and research to clarify the biology and ecology of *X. phrygia*, particularly those aspects of relevance to the ACT.

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Protection of woodland areas that are known habitats for the species is essential and will be achieved through the following management strategies:

- **Identification of potential habitat.** Suitable woodland patches, particularly those that contain the key tree species, Yellow Box, and those that contain mature stands of the Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland community (an endangered ecological community) have been identified in surveys undertaken by Environment ACT.
- **Protection of areas of identified habitat.** Where possible, patches of Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland known to be used by *X. phrygia* need protection from development causing habitat degradation or loss. Areas of high conservation value may be incorporated into existing reserves. Those patches of woodland that are identified as being habitat for the species should receive highest priority for protection.
- **Enhancement of significant woodlands.** Where possible, stands of Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland that are identified as having the highest conservation values should be managed to conserve habitat values. Protection of woodlands surrounding or connecting known habitat areas should be

encouraged, particularly those remnants containing mature trees, thereby maximising the food sources available to the species. Regeneration and protection of significant mature trees should be enhanced through the careful management of grazing and other pressures from stock.

- **Minimisation of adverse effects of fire on known habitats.** Known *X. phrygia* habitats should be given the same protective measures against unplanned fire, as are given to other identified areas of faunal significance.
- ⇒ Environment ACT will seek to implement these conservation management strategies where it has the responsibility to do so. It will also encourage other agencies, individuals and community groups to do likewise so that a coordinated regional approach is developed.

REGIONAL COOPERATION

Liaison with other authorities involved in the conservation of *X. phrygia* will be an essential part of regional conservation effort. The NSW NPWS and the Victorian Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE) are also involved in the conservation of *X. phrygia*. Liaison between Environment ACT and the National Regent Honeyeater Recovery Effort Coordinator is essential.

- ⇒ Environment ACT will monitor NSW and Victorian initiatives designed to enhance the conservation of *X. phrygia* and implement similar measures in the ACT.
- ⇒ Environment ACT will maintain links with the National Regent Honeyeater Recovery Effort in order that ACT conservation actions are consistent with and coordinated with national efforts.

MONITORING

Monitoring is essential to determine the long-term status of *X. phrygia* populations in the ACT region, and the success of any conservation measures taken. COG is active in this regard as part of the national recovery effort and may be able to contribute to a monitoring program.

- ⇒ Environment ACT will, in consultation with the National Regent Honeyeater Recovery Effort, encourage and where feasible, support bird surveys conducted in woodlands of the ACT region.
- ⇒ Environment ACT will forward any information on the species, particularly records, to the National Regent Honeyeater Recovery Effort Coordinator.

RESEARCH

Research into the ecology of *X. phrygia* is required to assist understanding of its conservation ecology and recovery requirements. Major research objectives are outlined in DCE (1994) and DNRE (1997), and include study of movements, ecological requirements (particularly flowering patterns and nectar productivity of key eucalypts), and social ecology of the species.

The Draft National Recovery Plan 1999-2003 (October 1998) outlines long term and specific recovery objectives, as well as research priorities.

⇒ Environment ACT will encourage and, where feasible, support research into the ecology and conservation of *X. phrygia*. Results of this research will be applied as appropriate.

Protection

This Action Plan, implemented in conjunction with the Action Plan for Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland, is the main instrument by which continued survival of *X. phrygia* and its grassy woodland habitat can be assisted in the ACT.

The Action Plan for Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland outlines proposed conservation measures for the protection of this endangered community in the ACT. It is anticipated that these conservation measures will contribute to the conservation of *X. phrygia*, as its habitat is largely within this ecological community.

MEASURES FOR PROTECTION

There are four principal measures for protecting the habitat of *X. phrygia* in the ACT:

1. **Reservation.** Recognised as providing the primary mechanism for ensuring sites of high conservation value are not converted to a land use incompatible with their natural values.
2. **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).** Memoranda of Understanding between the ACT Government and landholders, particularly the Commonwealth Government, provide another means by which sites with high conservation value will be managed so as to maintain their conservation value, while enabling compatible land uses to occur.
3. **Property Management Agreement (PMA) for leased rural land.** PMAs are being progressively introduced as rural leases are renewed. They establish an agreed framework for sustainable management of the land. Management standards may be agreed in recognition of particular conservation

issues. The PMA process is currently under review to improve flexibility and accountability so that advances in knowledge and changes in management requirements can be more satisfactorily accommodated.

Rural land in the northern part of the ACT contains areas of remnant woodland habitat that are used by *X. phrygia*. Conservation management of *X. phrygia* habitat, predominantly Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland, on rural leases, will be promoted in terms of requirements of the *Nature Conservation Act 1980* and the Action Plan for Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland Action Plan and this Action Plan. PMAs are the most suitable mechanism for addressing the conservation requirements of threatened species whose habitat occurs in leased rural land. PMAs for leases which contain woodland identified as habitat for threatened species will be required to provide for their conservation, sustainable management and improvement where appropriate.

4. **Off-reserve conservation on Public Land within the urban fabric.** Urban open space varies in status, tenure, land use and management authority. Where appropriate, the Conservator of Flora and Fauna may give directions under Section 47 of the *Nature Conservation Act 1980* for the protection of flora and timber on the land in question. Management Agreements or MOUs may be developed between the Conservator and an agency if management objectives or land use activities have potential to place conservation values at risk.

It is proposed to include into the Mount Majura Reserve, areas of Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland currently outside the Reserve on the north-western, lower slopes east of Antill Street, where *X. phrygia* has been recorded as breeding in recent years. This will require a variation to the Territory Plan. There are also opportunities in this location to enhance the long term habitat values in this area for the species by planting potential food trees.

Socio-economic Issues

The main social benefit of conserving the Regent Honeyeater, *X. phrygia*, is that it addresses community concerns that further loss or extinction of significant ecological communities, together with their component native species, be prevented.

Bird watching is a major national recreational pursuit. Thus conservation of bird communities enhances the lifestyle of ACT residents and provides eco-tourism opportunities (in keeping with promoting Canberra as the bush capital).

1. Future Urban Areas

The area of potential habitat for *X. phrygia* to be incorporated into Mt Majura is shown as Entertainment, Accommodation and Leisure on the Territory Plan. About 30 hectares of Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland will be considered for protection and habitat enhancement through the planting of potential food trees in the immediate vicinity.

2. Rural Leasing Aspects

Some of the woodland areas which are potential habitat for *X. phrygia* are within rural leases. The Rural Policy Taskforce has recently reviewed all aspects of rural leases including the recommendation of appropriate lease terms. Two recommendations of the Taskforce which have been accepted by the Government and will affect this Action Plan are that:

- the lease term for some parts of the ACT will be to the year 2020 with significant areas of rural land being available for 99 year leases; and
- there be no withdrawal clauses over any part of a rural lease unless it has been clearly defined for an imminent public work, such as a road, stormwater or other infrastructure, or where a habitat has been identified as needing special conservation status.

This will mean that the Territory would have to withdraw any area of land having conservation significance at the time of an application for a new lease, or acquire it subsequently under the provisions of the *Land Acquisition Act 1994*.

It is expected that it will be later in 1999 before rural lessees are able to take up a new lease as proposed under the proposed new arrangements. In the meantime, Environment ACT will need to identify areas requiring special conservation measures before applications for extended lease terms are received. In the event that large areas of a lease are to be withdrawn for conservation purposes, consideration will be given to the viability of the remainder of the lease.

Legislative Provisions

The following legislation is relevant to conservation of flora and fauna in the ACT region:

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Nature Conservation Act 1980

The Nature Conservation Act provides a mechanism to encourage the protection of native plants and animals (including fish and invertebrates), the identification of threatened species and communities, and management of Public Land reserved for nature conservation purposes. Specified activities are managed via a licensing system.

Native animals and plants may be declared in recognition of a particular conservation concern and increased controls and penalties apply. Species declared as endangered must be declared as having special protection status (SPS), the highest level of statutory protection that can be conferred.

As an endangered species, *X. phrygia* must be declared a SPS species and any activity affecting such a species is subject to special scrutiny. Conservation requirements are a paramount consideration and only activities related to conservation of the species or serving a special purpose are permissible. The Conservator of Flora and Fauna may only grant a licence for activities affecting a species with SPS where satisfied that the act specified in the licence meets a range of stringent conditions. Further information can be obtained from the Licensing Officer, Compliance and Quarantine Services, Environment ACT, telephone 6207 6376.

Other Relevant Provisions

The Nature Conservation Act provides authority for the Conservator to manage Public Land reserved for conservation of the natural environment. Activities that are inconsistent with management objectives for nature conservation are controlled. Special measures for conservation of a species or community of concern can be introduced in a reserved area, including restriction of access to important habitat.

Section 47 of the Act allows the Conservator to give the occupier of land directions for protection or conservation of native plants and animals. This provision is relevant to the management of threats to the conservation requirements of a species or community of concern that occurs on leased land.

Part VIA of the Act provides for the Conservator to enter into a Management Agreement with an agency where the agency's activities have potential to conflict with nature conservation objectives. This provision is relevant to management of conservation threats on unleased land.

The Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland, which provides habitat for *X. phrygia* has been declared as an endangered ecological community (formerly Instrument No. 89 of 1997 and currently Instrument No. 192 of 1998). The Conservator of Flora and Fauna has prepared an Action Plan for its conservation (Action Plan No. 10).

Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991

The Land (Planning and Environment) Act is the primary authority for land planning and administration. It establishes the Territory Plan, which identifies nature reserves, national parks and wilderness areas within the public land estate.

The Land (Planning and Environment) Act establishes the Heritage Places Register. Places of natural heritage significance are to be identified and conservation requirements specified.

Environmental Assessments and Inquiries may be initiated in relation to land use and development proposals.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995

The Act came into effect on 1 January 1996 and requires the preparation of recovery plans for endangered species (other than those presumed extinct), endangered populations, endangered ecological communities and vulnerable species. Threat abatement plans are required to manage key threatening processes with a view to their abatement, amelioration or elimination. A Species Impact Statement is required when a development application is made on land which contains areas declared to be critical habitat under Part 3 of the Act or which is likely to significantly effect threatened species, populations or ecological communities or their habitats.

The preparation of a Recovery Plan for *X. phrygia* is mandatory as the species has been listed as endangered.

COMMONWEALTH

Endangered Species Protection Act 1992

Under this legislation, *X. phrygia* has been declared an endangered species. The Commonwealth is required to prepare and implement recovery plans for the species as it

occurs in Commonwealth areas, and to cooperate with both the ACT and NSW authorities in implementing protection measures. The Commonwealth also encourages joint preparation and implementation of a recovery plan across State and Territory boundaries (ANCA 1994).

Consultation and Community Participation

It is appropriate that the conservation of *X. phrygia* and its associated grassy woodland habitat is promoted through suitable information signs, community liaison and public education. The objective of this promotion is to foster the protection of the species.

⇒ Environment ACT will actively participate in consultations with landholders in the ACT and surrounding NSW shires concerning management and use of areas of high conservation value.

Implementation, Evaluation and Review

RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Environment ACT (Wildlife Research and Monitoring) will have responsibility for coordinating implementation of this Action Plan subject to government priorities and resources.

⇒ Environment ACT will liaise with the National Regent Honeyeater Recovery Effort Coordinator to discuss longer-term management issues and actions.

EVALUATION

The Action Plan will be reviewed after three years. The review will comprise an assessment of progress using the following performance indicators:

- completion of commitments that can reasonably be expected to be finalised within the review timeframe (e.g. introduction of a statutory protection measure for a species, development of a management plan);
- completion of a stage in a process with a time line that exceeds the review period (e.g. design or commencement of a research program);
- commencement of a particular commitment that is of a continuing nature (e.g. design or commencement of a monitoring program for population abundance); and

- expert assessment of achievement of conservation objectives of the Action Plan.

The review will be reported to the ACT Flora and Fauna Committee. This will provide Environment ACT and the Flora and Fauna Committee an opportunity to assess progress, take account of developments in nature conservation knowledge, policy and administration and review directions and priorities for future conservation action.

The following conservation actions will be given priority attention:

- ⇒ implementation of management prescriptions to enhance the conservation status of the Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland;
- ⇒ undertaking research to clarify the biology and ecology of the species, particularly those aspects of relevance to the ACT; and
- ⇒ co-operation with regional and national recovery efforts.

Acknowledgments

Material for this Action Plan was prepared by Anthony Overs.

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David Geering is currently the Coordinator of the National Regent Honeyeater Recovery Effort.

Dr Jill Landsberg is a Senior Research Scientist with the CSIRO Division of Wildlife and Ecology.

The illustration of the species (Figure 1) was prepared for Environment ACT by Fiona Sivyser.

References

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List of Action Plans - October 1999

In accordance with Section 23 of the *Nature Conservation Act 1980*, the following Action Plans have been prepared by the Conservator of Flora and Fauna:

- No. 1: Natural Temperate Grassland -
an endangered ecological community.
- No. 2: Striped Legless Lizard (*Delma impar*)
- a vulnerable species.
- No. 3: Eastern Lined Earless Dragon
(*Tympanocryptis lineata pinguicollis*)
- an endangered species.
- No. 4: A leek orchid (*Prasophyllum petilum*)
- an endangered species.
- No. 5: A subalpine herb (*Gentiana bauerlenii*) -
an endangered species.
- No. 6: Northern Corroboree Frog (*Pseudophryne pengilleyi*) - a vulnerable species.
- No. 7: Golden Sun Moth (*Synemon plana*)
- an endangered species.
- No. 8: Button Wrinklewort (*Rutidosis leptorrhynchoides*)
- an endangered species.
- No. 9: Small Purple Pea (*Swainsona recta*)
- an endangered species.
- No. 10: Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland -
an endangered ecological community.
- No. 11: Two-spined Blackfish (*Gadopsis bispinosus*) - a vulnerable species.
- No. 12: Trout Cod (*Maccullochella macquariensis*)
- an endangered species.
- No. 13: Macquarie Perch (*Macquaria australasica*)
- an endangered species.
- No. 14: Murray River Crayfish (*Euastacus armatus*) - a vulnerable species.
- No. 15: Hooded Robin (*Melanodryas cucullata*)
- a vulnerable species.
- No. 16: Swift Parrot (*Lathamus discolor*)
- a vulnerable species.
- No. 17: Superb Parrot (*Polytelis swainsonii*)
- a vulnerable species.
- No. 18: Brown Treecreeper (*Climacteris picumnus*) - a vulnerable species.
- No. 19: Painted Honeyeater (*Grantiella picta*)
- a vulnerable species.
- No. 20: Regent Honeyeater (*Xanthomyza phrygia*)
- an endangered species.
- No. 21: Perunga Grasshopper (*Perunga ochracea*) - a vulnerable species.
- No. 22: Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby (*Petrogale penicillata*) - an endangered species.
- No. 23: Smoky Mouse (*Pseudomys fumeus*)
- an endangered species.

No. 24: Tuggeranong Lignum (*Muehlenbeckia tuggeranong*) - an endangered species.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information on this Action Plan or other threatened species and ecological communities can be obtained from:

Environment ACT
(Wildlife Research and Monitoring)
Phone: (02) 6207 2126
Fax: (02) 6207 2122

Environment ACT Homepage:
<http://www.act.gov.au/enviro>

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