CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA

Twenty-eighth meeting of the Animals Committee
Tel Aviv (Israel), 30 August-3 September 2015

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Species trade and conservation

Periodic review of species included in Appendices I and II (Resolution Conf 14.8 (Rev CoP16))

PERIODIC REVIEW OF *CYCLOPSITTA DIOPTHALMA COXENI*

1. This document has been submitted by Australia.[1]

2. After the 25th meeting of the Animals Committee (Geneva, July 2011) and in response to Notification No. 2011/038, Australia committed to the evaluation of *Cyclopsitta diophthalma coxeni* as part of the Periodic review of the species included in the CITES Appendices.

3. This taxon is endemic to Australia.

4. Following our review of the status of this species, Australia recommends to maintain *C. d. coxeni* on Appendix I in accordance with the provisions of Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev CoP 16) Annex 4.

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[1] *The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CITES Secretariat (or the United Nations Environment Programme) concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.*

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA

DRAFT PROPOSAL TO AMEND THE APPENDICES

(in accordance with Annex 4 to Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP16), as amended)

Seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Johannesburg (South Africa) 24 September - 5 October 2016

- DRAFT-

CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSALS FOR AMENDMENT OF APPENDICES I AND II

A. Proposal

To maintain *Cyclopsitta diophthalma coxeni* on CITES Appendix I, in accordance with the provisions of Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev CoP 16) Annex 4.

B. Proponent

Australia*.

C. Supporting statement

1. Taxonomy

1.1 Class: Aves

1.2 Order: Passeriformes

1.3 Family: Psittacidae

1.4 Genus, species or subspecies, including author and year: *Cyclopsitta diophthalma coxeni*

1.5 Scientific synonyms: None

1.6 Common names: English: Coxen's Fig-Parrot
French: Perroquet masqué de Coxen
Spanish: Lorito de Coxen

1.7 Code numbers:

2. Overview

As part of the ongoing periodic review of the Appendices, the Animals Committee recommended that the status of the Coxen's Fig-Parrot be evaluated (AC25 Doc. 15.6). The taxon was selected for periodic review between CoP15 and CoP17 by the Animals Committee at AC 25 in accordance

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with Resolution 14.8 (Rev. CoP16) on Periodic Review of the Appendices. Notification went to the Parties in Notification 2011/038; Australia undertook to complete this review.

C. d. coxeni was listed on CITES Appendix I on 1 July 1975. The CITES trade database reports no exports from Australia to date.

C. d. coxeni is one of Australia's rarest and least known birds. It has been very rare since at least the 1920s (Olsen 2007) and recorded on just over 200 occasions since Gould described it in 1867. The subspecies has a small wild population of only around 100 breeding birds thought to be spread across four subpopulations consisting of a maximum of 50 individuals each. The species is considered vulnerable to both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Examples of the former are the small population size limiting social interaction and exchange of information about food sources (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001); a major example of the latter is the impact of invasive weeds, particularly along the bird's favoured riparian corridors. Furthermore, the species is thought to have undergone a marked decline in its population in the past, especially around the turn of the 20th century (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001). For these reasons, the taxon clearly meets criteria A(ii,v),C(i) under Annex 1 of Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev CoP 16).

Furthermore, although the species is not currently known to be in trade, legal or otherwise, it may be affected by trade in future. Illegal collection of Coxen's Fig-Parrot for aviculture is highlighted as a potential threat in the national recovery plan (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001). Considerable interest in aviculture of fig-parrots exists, particularly in Europe. The demand for Coxen's Fig-Parrot in overseas collections would be extremely high, were birds to become available legally or illegally. Any trade in the species would be detrimental to maintenance of the already critically low wild population. Under Annex 5, a species 'may be affected by trade' if 'there is demonstrable potential international demand for the species that may be detrimental to its survival in the wild.' Therefore, we propose to maintain *C. d. coxeni* on Appendix I.

3. Species characteristics

3.1 Distribution

Historically, *C. d. coxeni* was recorded sporadically between Rockhampton on the central Queensland coast and Richmond River in northern New South Wales; west to the Bunya Mountains, Main Range, Richmond Range and Koreelah Range (Garnett et al. 2010); and at all elevations from sea level to approximately 900 m (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001). There are also unconfirmed reports from outside its accepted former range.

Source: Species Profile and Threats Database, Department of the Environment, Australia

3.2 Habitat

Coxen's Fig-Parrot occurs primarily in lowland subtropical rainforest, dry rainforest, littoral and developing littoral rainforest, sub-littoral mixed scrub, riparian corridors through woodland as well as adjoining open woodland and cleared land; also urbanised and agricultural areas supporting fig trees *Ficus* spp. (Higgins 1999; Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001; Garnett et al. 2010).

This taxon was formerly most abundant in lowland subtropical rainforest (Holmes 1990, 1994b), habitat that was extensively cleared following settlement of south-eastern Queensland (Cayley 1938; Illidge 1924; Martindale 1986). Remaining populations are concentrated into fragmented remnants of dry rainforest and cool subtropical rainforest that are drier and more hilly than habitats formerly occupied (Holmes 1990; Martindale 1986). Within these rainforest habitats, the fig-parrot is likely to favour alluvial areas that support figs and other trees with fleshy fruits (Holmes 1990; Martindale 1986), in particular, habitats that have a high diversity of fig species, and that have a fruiting season that is staggered across moisture and altitudinal gradients (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001).

Most recent records have been from the edges of small stands of remnant native vegetation (Holmes 1994a) and in thin tracts of gallery forest (Norris 1964).

Nests of Coxen's Fig-Parrot have been recorded in subtropical rainforest, dry rainforest and in the ecotone between subtropical rainforest and sclerophyll forest (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001; Holmes 1994a, 1995).

3.3 Biological characteristics

The breeding biology of Coxen's Fig-Parrot is almost entirely unknown. The breeding season is thought to extend from October to December or January (Holmes 1990, 1995). The nest is placed in a chamber excavated in the rotting wood of a decaying limb or trunk of a living or dead tree (Chisholm 1924; Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Plan 2001; Holmes 1995). The only description of the nest and eggs, was subsequently found to be erroneous (Beruldsen 2002; Forshaw 1979), therefore the appearance of the nest and eggs is unknown. Based on information from other fig-parrots and observations of Coxen's Fig-Parrot in groups of four (presumed to be adults and juveniles) late in the season, it is likely that the female normally lays two eggs to a clutch (Holmes 1990, 1995; Irby 1930). No information is available on the incubation or fledging periods but they are likely to be similar to those of *C. d. macleayana*, which, in captivity, are approximately 18–24 days and 34–42 days or more, respectively (Forshaw 1981; Hibbert 1988; Higgins 1999; Romer & Spittall 1994). No information is available on breeding success, but captive birds of *C. d. macleayana* are capable of laying up to three clutches in a single season (Romer & Spittall 1994).

The precise age of sexual maturity is unknown, but captive pairs of *C. d. macleayana* have bred in immature plumage (Taylor 1975). No information is available on life expectancy or ages of natural mortality.

Coxen's Fig-Parrot is usually observed singly, in pairs or, especially during winter, in small flocks of up to 12 birds (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Plan 2001; Gynther 2006, pers. comm.; Holmes 1990; Irby 1930; Martindale 1986; Norris 1964). The other Australian subspecies, *C. d. macleayana* and *C. d. marshalli*, roost in gatherings of up to 200 birds (Bourke & Austin 1947; Forshaw 1967b; Holmes 1995). Communal roosting has not been recorded in Coxen's Fig-Parrot, but it has been speculated that communal roosting may formerly have occurred when the population size was greater (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Plan 2001; Holmes 1995). No information is available on the taxon’s breeding dispersion, but it is likely that, like other subspecies of Double-eyed Fig-Parrot, it breeds in discrete pairs (Forshaw & Muller 1978; Higgins 1999).

3.4 Morphological characteristics

Coxen's Fig-Parrot is a small, compact parrot measuring approximately 13–16 cm in length (Higgins 1999). No weight data are available, but measurements of other Australian subspecies suggest that it is likely to weigh about 35 to 40 g (Higgins 1999).

Adult Double-eyed Fig-Parrots are predominantly bright green, darkest on the upperparts and lightest on the breast and belly, with a prominent yellow flank stripe that is partly visible when the wings are closed. The various subspecies differ in the amount and variety of colour on the head and face. Coxen's Fig-Parrot has a blue forehead and cheek patches; it has a red facial stripe, bordered above with yellow and red lores. The outer upperwing is blue, as well as the outer few secondaries and secondary coverts; and there are red patches on the hindmost scapulars. Underwings are bright green, with black flight feathers separated from the axillaries by a broad cream stripe. The undertail feathers are dark-grey. The bill is black with dark-grey skin around the base of the upper mandible; its legs and feet are light-grey, irises brown and there is grey-black skin around the eyes. The sexes are alike in appearance, and may be inseparable in the field (Higgins 1999). Juvenile Coxen's Fig-Parrots can be distinguished from the adult birds on the basis of bill colour (Gynther 2006, pers. comm.).

3.5 Role of the species in its ecosystem

Parrots, lorikeets and fig-parrots comprise a large family that forms a significant part of the Australian avifauna. Fig-parrots presumably play a role in dispersing seeds of rainforest fruits after ingestion, when they excrete them undigested while moving through native habitat. Apart from generating fig-tree seedlings, this may also play a small role in fertilising soil, or contributing to canopy detritus that helps support epiphyte communities.

4. Status and trends

4.1 Habitat trends

Habitat destruction and concomitant effects have had a major effect on Coxen's Fig-parrot populations. Its decline in range and abundance was caused by extensive clearance of habitat for agriculture. Isolated remnant populations are vulnerable to fire and other stochastic events, predation, activities of illegal egg collectors and illegal collecting for the avicultural trade.

4.2 Population size

The total population of Coxen's Fig-Parrot is estimated, with low reliability, at 100 breeding birds (Garnett et al. 2010). Accurate estimates are difficult owing to the extremely low number of reliable records of this subspecies: Coxen's Fig-Parrot was recorded just over 200 times between 1866 (when it was first discovered) and the turn of the 21st century. There were approximately 30 sightings in NSW and about 90 in Queensland between 1970 and 2000 (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001). The Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team (2001) with even lower reliability, estimated the population to be divided into four subpopulations with a maximum of 50 individuals in each.

Although the tenure of land has not been recorded for any discrete subpopulations, most records of Coxen's Fig-Parrot have been obtained in national parks and state forests, although many sightings at the northern limits of the distribution (from the Gympie area northward) have been on freehold land (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001).

4.3 Population structure

Coxen's Fig-Parrot is estimated to occur in four subpopulations: greater Bundaberg region, Maleny/Imbil/Kin Kin Creek area, the Qld/NSW border area (Lamington National Park, Whian Whian State Forest, Alstonville Plateau), and the upper Hastings River catchment. This estimate is considered to be of low reliability, i.e. there is uncertainty about the number of subpopulations and the extent of genetic separation between subpopulations (Garnett & Crowley 2000).

The largest of the subpopulations is estimated to consist of 50 breeding birds. This estimate is considered to be of low reliability (Garnett & Crowley 2000). No information is available on the number of birds in any of the other three subpopulations, or on the locality, population trends or land tenure of any of the four subpopulations.

4.4 Population trends

There is no reliable information on the population trends in any of the four subpopulations. However, the population has been very small for a long time and is therefore unlikely still to be declining (Garnett et al. 2010).

Targeted surveys conducted during the past two decades have recorded very few birds and have found little other evidence of the taxon's existence (Gynther 1996a, 1996b; Gynther & O'Reilly 1998; Gynther et al. 1998; Holmes 1990, 1995; Martindale 1986, 1996). Incidental sightings continue to be reported sporadically by members of the public. This suggests that Coxen's Fig-Parrot continues to persist, but in very low numbers (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001).

4.5 Geographic trends

Coxen's Fig-Parrot was probably never a common bird (Chisholm 1929; Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001; Irby 1930), and may have been declining before the arrival of Europeans (New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 2002). Nonetheless, it is likely that its numbers declined to critical levels around the turn of the 20th century due to the clearing of lowland rainforest for residential blocks and agriculture, and the logging of rainforest trees (Illidge 1924; Cayley 1938; Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001; Martindale 1986).

No populations of Coxen's Fig-Parrot have been identified as being of special importance to the recovery effort. The lack of knowledge about the subspecies and its distribution (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001) makes it impossible to assess the importance of individual populations and, indeed, indicates that all remaining populations are important for the long-term survival of the subspecies.

5. Threats

The apparent decline in Coxen's Fig-Parrot numbers around the turn of 20th century was probably due to the loss of habitat caused by the clearing of lowland rainforest for residential and agricultural purposes and the logging of rainforest trees (Cayley 1938; Illidge 1924; Martindale 1986).

Current potential threats to Coxen's Fig-Parrot include degradation of habitat by invasive weeds, especially in remnants of lowland riparian subtropical rainforest where figs and other fleshy-fruited rainforest trees are concentrated (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001; Joseph 1988); loss and degradation of habitat due to logging in the ecotone between subtropical rainforest and eucalypt forest (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001); loss of isolated stands of fig trees (which are likely to be an important source of food over winter) due to a lack of natural recruitment (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001); and potentially the illegal collection of birds or eggs for the avicultural trade (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Plan 2001; Holmes 1990).

Although the species is not currently known to be in trade, legal or otherwise, it may be affected by trade in future. Illegal collection of Coxen's Fig-Parrot for aviculture is highlighted as a potential threat in the national recovery plan (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001).

6. Utilization and trade

6.1 National utilization

None. This subspecies is not widely represented in zoos or private bird collections.

6.2 Legal trade

No global trade in *C. diophthalma coxeni* has been reported over the period 1975 to the present. The CITES trade database reports no exports of this taxon from Australia.

6.3 Parts and derivatives in trade

None.

6.4 Illegal trade

There was, and is currently, no indication of illegal trade in the Coxen's Fig-Parrot. Illegal trade is not considered to have been a factor in this taxon's decline.

6.5 Actual or potential trade impacts

The possibility of illegal collection of specimens or eggs of Coxen's Fig-Parrot for the avicultural trade may be regarded as a potential threat to the taxon (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Plan 2001; Holmes 1990).

7. Legal instruments

7.1 National

Coxen's Fig-parrot is listed as Endangered under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. In the state of New South Wales it is listed as Critically Endangered under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*; and in Queensland it is listed as Endangered under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

7.2 International

The Coxen's Fig-Parrot has been listed on CITES Appendix I since 1975. Permits are required for import and export and no commercial trade is allowed.

8. Species management

8.1 Management measures

The main aims of the recovery effort for Coxen's Fig-Parrot have been to establish its population size and distribution, and to improve the quality and extent of suitable habitat. However, because the status of the subspecies is so poorly known, it is difficult to predict if these measures are sufficient to secure its long-term survival (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001).

The following recovery actions have been implemented:

Field surveys in Queensland and New South Wales (Gynther 1996a, 1996b; Gynther & O'Reilly 1998; Holmes 1990, 1994a, 1995; Martindale 1986); trials on the related subspecies *C. d. macleayana* to develop captive breeding techniques for Coxen's Fig-Parrot (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001); summarised information on biology and ecology (Holmes 1990); three recovery plans (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001; Davidson 1993; New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 2002) and two recovery outlines (Garnett 1993; Garnett & Crowley 2000); formation of a recovery team (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001); habitat mapping at some sites in New South Wales (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001; Horton 1996; Jago 1997); habitat rehabilitation through fig tree planting programs in Queensland and New South Wales, and the funding of projects to rehabilitate and revegetate remnant gallery rainforest on the Sunshine Coast of south-eastern Queensland (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001; Gynther 2006); study to identify potential lowland habitat and to determine the characteristics of fig-parrot habitats (Jago 1997); caged fig-parrots of the

subspecies *C. d. macleayana* have been placed at some sites in an attempt to attract Coxen's Fig-Parrots (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001; Martindale 1996).

Efforts have been made to inform and educate the public about Coxen's Fig-Parrot and its status. Initiatives have included the publication of articles in ornithological and natural history periodicals, the distribution of more than 10 000 information brochures, coverage in the media in both Queensland and New South Wales, and presentations to various interest groups (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001). Funding has been provided to investigate the genetic relationships between the Australian subspecies of the Double-eyed Fig-Parrot (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001). Guidelines have been formulated for the establishment and operation of a Coxen's Fig-Parrot Records Appraisal Committee to appraise incidental sightings (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001).

The two most recent recovery plans propose to continue with and expand upon the actions described above. Proposed recovery actions include ecological assessment and monitoring, improvement of keeping and taxonomic understanding, and expanded study of related subspecies including release trails and captive breeding.

8.2 Population monitoring

One of the main aims of the recovery effort for Coxen's Fig-Parrot has been to establish the size and distribution of the fig-parrot population.

8.3 Control measures

8.3.1 International

C. d. coxeni has been listed on Appendix I of CITES since 1975.

8.3.2 Domestic

The Coxen's Fig-Parrot is listed as Endangered under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). In the state of New South Wales it is listed as Critically Endangered under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*; and in Queensland it is listed as Endangered under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

8.4 Captive breeding and artificial propagation

There are no captive populations of Coxen's Fig-Parrot. The establishment of a captive breeding program has been advocated in all three published recovery plans (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001; Davidson 1993; New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 2002). However, failure to locate active nests of the subspecies (from which breeding stock could be acquired) has impeded the initiation of a captive breeding population (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001; New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 2002).

8.5 Habitat conservation

One of the main aims of the recovery effort for Coxen's Fig-Parrot is to improve the quality and extent of its habitat, through fig tree planting programs in Queensland and New South Wales, and funding of projects to rehabilitate and revegetate remnant gallery rainforest on the Sunshine Coast of south-eastern Queensland (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001; Gynther 2006).

Protection and enhancement of habitat is an identified action of the recovery plans (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001; New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 2002). This will involve the development of management guidelines for logging operations in areas of identified fig-parrot habitat, the regulation of land-use by state and local authorities, the rehabilitation of habitat, and the implementation of programs to assist the propagation of food trees.

8.6 Safeguards

The taxon is protected under national environment legislation in Australia. Protection under national and state laws safeguard the taxon by controlling impacts on wild animals and taking from the wild of endangered species. Permission for collection of live birds from the wild will be issued only if the proposed work falls within the framework for the recovery of the species. Other actions that may impact on the population or habitat of the species are also controlled.

9. Information on similar species

The taxonomy of Coxen's Fig-Parrot requires resolution (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001). The three subspecies of *C. diophthalma* that occur in Australia (*C. d. coxeni*, *C. d. marshalli* and *C. d. macleayana*) were formerly treated as separate species (Higgins 1999). Features of Coxen's Fig-Parrot including its large size (compared to other subspecies), lack of sexual dimorphism (Mathews 1946; Rothschild & Hartert 1901), arrangement of primary feathers (Higgins, 1999; NSW NPWS 2002) and egg morphology (Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team 2001) may be sufficient to denote Coxen's Fig-Parrot as a separate species.

10. Consultations

The Australian CITES Scientific Authority is grateful for the input of Ian Gynther and Michael Devery from the Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection, and Shane Ruming and John Martindale from the New South Wales Office of Environment and Heritage.

11. Additional remarks

12. References

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