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

Eighteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Colombo (Sri Lanka), 23 May – 3 June 2019

CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSALS FOR AMENDMENT OF APPENDICES I AND II

A. Proposal

To transfer *Dasyornis longirostris* from CITES Appendix I to CITES Appendix II, in accordance with provisions of Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev CoP17), Annex 4 precautionary measures A1 and A2a(i).

B. Proponent

Australia*:

C. Supporting statement

1. Taxonomy

1.1 Class: Aves

1.2 Order: Passeriformes

1.3 Family: Dasyornithidae

1.4 Genus, species or subspecies, including author and year: *Dasyornis longirostris* Gould, 1841

1.5 Scientific synonyms: None.

1.6 Common names: English: Western Bristlebird, Long-billed Bristlebird, Western Australian Bristlebird
French: Dasyorne à long bec
Spanish: Picocerdas Oriental

1.7 Code numbers:

2. Overview

At the 29th meeting of the Animals Committee (AC29 Com 7 Rev) the Committee selected *Dasyornis longirostris* (Western Bristlebird) for review between CoP17 and CoP19 in accordance with Resolution Conf. 14.8 (Rev. CoP17) *Periodic Review of the Appendices*. Parties were notified of the Animals Committee's selection in Notification 2017/069. Australia's review was provided to the 30th meeting of Animals Committee, and the Committee asked the Secretariat to invite the proposal to be submitted to the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

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* *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.*

Dasyornis longirostris was listed on CITES Appendix I on 1 July 1975. The primary threat to *D. longirostris* has historically been destruction and modification of habitat by clearing, draining and unsuitable fire regimes. Although most of the population currently inhabits protected areas, wildfires remain a major threat to the survival of the species (TSSC 2018). The species is protected nationally. The CITES trade database reports no trade in this species.

Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev CoP17) resolves that, when considering proposals to amend Appendix I and II, species that *are or may be affected by trade* should be included in Appendix I if they meet at least one of the biological criteria listed in Appendix I. A species "is or may be affected by trade" if:

i) it is known to be in trade (using the definition of 'trade' in Article I of the Convention), and that trade has or may have a detrimental impact on the status of the species; or

ii) it is suspected to be in trade, or there is demonstrable potential international demand for the species, that may be detrimental to its survival in the wild.

There is no known incidence of trade in this species. The species is demonstrably not in trade. There is no suspected or demonstrable potential demand for the species. Future commercial trade is unlikely. There is no evidence that trade is or may be a threat to the survival of this species. Therefore *D. longirostris* does not meet the basic criteria for inclusion on Appendix I. *Dasyornis longirostris* is eligible for transfer from Appendix I to Appendix II in accordance with Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev CoP17).

3. Species characteristics

3.1 Distribution

Dasyornis longirostris is endemic to south-western Western Australia, where it has an uneven distribution in coastal areas east of the city of Albany. It currently only occurs in three locations – Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve area, Mount Manypeaks Nature Reserve Area, and Fitzgerald River National Park area (TSSC 2018). The highest density occurs between Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve and Waychinicup Inlet; and in or near Fitzgerald River National Park. *D. longirostris* has not been located in the area between the two main subpopulations, a distance of 120 km, despite the availability of extensive suitable habitat (DPaW 2014). The only population west of Albany is a small translocated population near Walpole, which is probably now extinct (TSSC 2018).

3.2 Habitat

Dasyornis longirostris inhabits coastal heathland in the temperate zone of south-western Australia (Higgins and Peter 2002). Suitable habitat is typically low, dense and floristically diverse, containing a wide variety of shrubs especially of the families Proteaceae (e.g. *Banksia*) and Myrtaceae (e.g. *Leptospermum*) 0.5–1.5 m tall (Higgins and Peter 2002). Eastern subpopulations (i.e. in and near Fitzgerald River National Park) use closed heath 0.5–1.0 m high among scattered patches of mallee (*Eucalyptus* sp.); although more open habitat may be used if there are enough patches of dense shrubs in the area (Higgins and Peter 2002). *Dasyornis longirostris* also frequents unburnt swampy areas, dominated by sedges and thickets, which may provide important refuges during and after fire (TSSC 2018).

3.3 Biological characteristics

Dasyornis longirostris is a sedentary, ground-dwelling bird with restricted dispersal ability (DPaW 2014). It is reluctant to fly and when it does, its flight is low and weak, and only over short distances of 10–20 m (TSSC 2018). These factors make it susceptible to threatening processes such as fire and possibly increased chance of predation.

Dasyornis longirostris forages on or close to the ground, on invertebrates such as worms, snails, insects and larvae, and seeds (BirdLife International 2017). Breeding has been recorded between July and October (DPaW 2014). Females lay two eggs in a domed nest made from loosely woven sedges, rushes and sticks (Higgins & Peter 2002).

A generation time of 5.2 years, derived from an age at first breeding of 1.5 years, and a maximum longevity of 7.3 years were extrapolated for this species from equivalent estimates for *D. brachypterus* (TSSC 2018).

3.4 Morphological characteristics

Dasyornis longirostris is a small (17 cm), largely terrestrial bird weighing 26–39 g (Higgins and Peter 2002). It has a stout body with short, rounded wings, a broad, graduated tail which is often ragged, and a sturdy, slightly decurved bill (del Hoyo et al. 2007). A number of stiff, short bristles at the base of the bill give this species and its congeners their common name (del Hoyo et al. 2007). Upperparts coloration is mainly dark brown, paler on the head and mantle with distinct pale scalloping or streaking; the wings, rump and tail are rufous. Its underparts are off-white to brown-grey, palest on the throat, with fine dark grey-brown scalloping. The bill is dark-grey with a creamy-pink base to the lower mandible. The irises are red-brown, the legs and feet grey or dirty pink. Sexes are alike. There is no geographical variation (Higgins and Peter 2002).

3.5 Role of the species in its ecosystem

Little is known about the role of *D. longirostris* in its ecosystem. At Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve it co-occurs with two other restricted-range bird species (Noisy Scrub-bird *Atrichthornis clamosus* and Western Whipbird *Psophodes nigrogularis*) (Danks et al. 1996) that presumably occupy similar ecological niches (DPaW 2014). Dense coastal heath at Two Peoples Bay also supports relict populations of two small macropods, Gilbert's Potoroo and Quokka (Woinarksi et al. 2014).

4. Status and trends

4.1 Habitat trends

A large percentage of habitat suitable for *D. longirostris* was lost through clearing, draining and burning after European settlement of south-western Australia, starting approximately 200 years ago (del Hoyo 2007). Despite large areas of apparently suitable habitat remaining, *D. longirostris* survives only in discontinuous subpopulations (DPaW 2014). A series of large wildfires substantially reduced the area and quality of habitat for *D. longirostris* between 2001 and 2010 (BirdLife International 2017). In 2015 a major fire burnt approximately 90 per cent of habitat occupied by *D. longirostris* at Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve, leading to an additional decline of this important subpopulation (TSSC 2018).

4.2 Population size

In 2015 the total population of *D. longirostris* was conservatively estimated at no more than about 230 pairs or 460 adults, of which about two-thirds were in the western subpopulation at Two Peoples Bay/Waychinicup/Mount Manypeaks area; and the remaining birds in Fitzgerald River National Park (TSSC 2018). The species is considered among the 20 Australian bird taxa most likely to go extinct in the next 20 years (Geyle et al. 2018).

4.3 Population structure

Poorly known. *D. longirostris* occupies home ranges that may overlap with other individuals (DPaW 2014). Territory size is estimated at seven hectares (Garnett et al. 2011) and territories may remain unchanged for 30 years (Smith 1987). Burnt areas of suitable habitat are reoccupied after varying periods, e.g. moist habitat at Two Peoples Bay was reoccupied 2–3 years after fire (Garnett et al. 2011), while heath in drier areas was reoccupied 11–14 years after fire at Waychinicup River and 14–28 years after fire at Fitzgerald River National Park (Garnett et al. 2011).

4.4 Population trends

Between 2001 and 2010 the population declined by approximately 48 per cent (TSSC 2018), owing to a series of wildfires that destroyed and modified a large area of habitat (BirdLife International 2017). In 2015 a major fire burnt approximately 90 per cent of habitat occupied by *D. longirostris* at Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve (Comer and Burbidge 2016), causing an estimated decline of 45 per cent in this important subpopulation (TSSC 2018). The total population of *D. longirostris* is likely to have declined by at least 63 per cent between 2001 and 2015 (TSSC 2018).

4.5 Geographic trends

Historic records indicate that *D. longirostris* may have occurred in a greater area of coastal habitat in south-western Australia prior to European settlement, i.e. from near Perth to Augusta and from Albany

to Fitzgerald River National Park (DPAW 2009, 2014). It was discovered near Perth in 1839 and recorded in the same area in the 1880s; a population at Wilson Inlet, 400 km to the south, was discovered in 1907 but was destroyed by fire in 1914. The species was not recorded again until 1945 at Two Peoples Bay (del Hoyo et al 2007).

In 1999–2000 and 2007, 18 individuals were translocated from Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve to near Walpole, west of Albany. This subpopulation is thought to be extinct (TSSC 2018).

The species is listed as Endangered B1ab (iii,v) on the IUCN Red List as it has a very small range and small population which is undergoing decline (BirdLife International 2016).

5. Threats

Dasyornis longirostris is vulnerable to habitat destruction and modification, especially owing to increasing intensity and frequency of fires (TSSC 2018). A large fire has the potential to burn several key sites in a single event (TSSC 2018). Climate change could increase the threat from fire (TSSC 2018). Although habitat clearing was a major threat in the past, most subpopulations of *D. longirostris* now survive in protected areas so clearing is not perceived as a major threat (DPaW 2014). Other possible threats to its habitat include vegetation dieback caused by the fungus *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, weed invasion and degradation by feral herbivores (TSSC 2018). Removal of vegetation by fire may leave *D. longirostris* vulnerable to increased predation (TSSC 2018).

There is no evidence of trade threatening the survival of this species.

6. Utilization and trade

6.1 National utilization

None.

6.2 Legal trade

No trade is recorded in the CITES Trade Database and the species is not traded domestically.

6.3 Parts and derivatives in trade

No trade is recorded in the CITES Trade Database.

6.4 Illegal trade

There is no known incidence of illegal trade in *D. longirostris*. Illegal trade is not considered to have been a factor in the decline of this species.

6.5 Actual or potential trade impacts

The species is protected nationally. There is no known incidence of trade in this species. Trade has therefore not had a detrimental impact on the status of the species. There is no demonstrable potential demand for the species. Future commercial trade is unlikely. Some trade for scientific or conservation purposes may arise in remaining specimens and there are national control measures in place to control for any potential for detrimental impact to the species.

7. Legal instruments

7.1 National

Dasyornis longirostris is listed as Endangered under the Australia's national environmental legislation – the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act); it is listed as Vulnerable under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 2016 (Western Australia); January 2018 List*.

7.2 International

Dasyornis longirostris has been listed on Appendix I of CITES since 1975. No commercial trade is permitted and any non-commercial trade would require CITES permits.

8. Species management

8.1 Management measures

Dasyornis longirostris is subject to an approved conservation advice and a recovery plan under national environmental legislation.

The approved conservation advice sets out the grounds on which the species is listed as threatened under national environmental legislation, the main factors that are the cause of it being listed as threatened, and information about what could appropriately be done to stop the decline of, or support the recovery of the species (or if nothing can appropriately be done). The approved conservation advice for this species (TSSC 2018) came into effect on 15 February 2018. The primary conservation action identified in this conservation advice is to maintain high value breeding and foraging habitat for the species by undertaking active fire management at all known locations, including by implementing fire exclusion zones for areas identified as high value habitat or refuge areas, undertaking fire management to ensure prevailing fire regimes do not promote invasion of exotic species including introduced predators, and by avoiding physical damage to habitat by fire management operations (TSSC 2018). Other management measures identified include implementing control programs for feral predators and other threatening invasive species at known sites inhabited by *D. longirostris*.

The recovery plan identifies the management actions and research necessary to stop the decline of, and support the recovery of, the species so that its chances of long-term recovery in the wild are maximised. The Australian Government is committed to acting in accordance with a recovery plan that is in force under national environmental legislation and to implementing the plan as it applies to Commonwealth managed areas. The national recovery was put into force under national environmental legislation on 21 October 2014.

The national recovery plan for *D. longirostris* (DAWR 2014) identifies locating suitable habitat as a priority for this species, noting that the identification of areas with suitable habitat will provide for appropriate management of these areas for future possible translocations. Management of habitat critical for the species' survival is also identified, with proposed actions to include feral predator control programs, and fire management, monitoring programs as well as captive breeding and translocations. The species is represented almost entirely in conservation estate.

8.2 Population monitoring

The national recovery plan for *D. longirostris* (DAWR 2014) notes that monitoring of the species will be continued and expanded where possible to determine distribution, estimate population densities and evaluate management actions.

The national recovery plan (DAWR 2014) also identifies that a complete census of the species will be completed approximately every five years and systematic surveys will be undertaken in former or potential habitat. Any reported sightings of individuals in areas not known to support the species will be investigated to identify potential new populations. Work will also be undertaken to develop survey and monitoring protocols to improve detection and population changes in these cryptic species.

8.3 Control measures

8.3.1 International

Dasyornis longirostris has been listed on Appendix I of CITES since 1975.

8.3.2 Domestic

Dasyornis longirostris is protected through state and national legislation throughout its current and former range (see section 7.1).

It is listed as Endangered under Australian national environmental legislation (*Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*). Under this legislation, an action requires approval from the Australian Government Environment Minister if the action has, will have, or is likely to have, a significant impact on the species.

When making a decision about an action that may have an impact on the species and what conditions to attach to any approval of an action, the Minister must not act inconsistently with a recovery plan that is in force under national environmental legislation and must have regard to any approved conservation advice for the species.

International movement of the species is also regulated under this national legislation.

It is listed as Vulnerable in the state of Western Australia (*Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*)

In Western Australia, the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950* provides protections for all fauna native to Australia. Native fauna may only be taken or disturbed under non-commercial licenses, such as for research or management. A licence may be issued to the taking of a threatened species for breeding purposes, such as for a recovery program, but would not be issued for breeding for sale or trade. A licence is required to keep fauna for any purpose. Species that are likely to become extinct, are rare, or otherwise in need of special protection may be declared by the Minister as specially protected fauna. The effect of such a declaration is that the penalties are increased for taking the fauna not in accordance with a licence.

8.4 Captive breeding and artificial propagation

There is currently no captive breeding population. A trial translocation in 1999-2000 demonstrated that birds were able to persist for some time at this location, and further translocations are to be considered if this is feasible (DAWR 2014).

8.5 Habitat conservation

Previous and existing management of habitat used by this species include: management of fire risk and exclusion of fire in habitat critical to the survival of the species, introduction of hygiene protocols to manage the risk of introducing or spreading *Phytophthora* disease in the region, control of problem environmental invasive plants such as blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus*), gorse, lantana (*Lantana camara*), willows and bridal creeper (*Asparagus asparagoides*) (DAWR 2014).

The species' conservation advice and recovery plan identifies actions to address habitat degradation and depletion of resources. Priorities for management of the species' habitat include: control of feral and pest species within an adaptive management framework (e.g. noting responses of these to fire and fire management), continue fire management and monitor responses to fire, and continue to implement hygiene protocols and management of *Phytophthora* spread (DAWR 2014).

8.6 Safeguards

Regardless of any reclassification under CITES, the species will continue to be regulated by national environmental legislation as well as state environmental legislation. The species is not subject to commercial harvest across any of its range. Take from the wild is controlled by both national and state regulation. Permission to collect, or other actions that may impact on the species can only be undertaken if consistent with the species' recovery plan.

9. Information on similar species

The genus *Dasyornis* contains three species and five extant taxa (del Hoyo and Collar 2016). All are found in coastal heathland habitat in south-western and south-eastern Australia. *Dasyornis broadbenti litoralis*, a subspecies of rufous bristlebird, formerly occurred in south-western Australia, but is almost certainly extinct and is currently the only other *Dasyornis* taxon listed on CITES Appendices (del Hoyo et al 2007).

Studies of the closely related *D. brachypterus* (Eastern Bristlebird) in south-eastern Australia (Lindenmeyer et al. 2009) have been used to infer elements of the ecology and population dynamics of *D. longirostris*. Studies showed that spatial patchiness of fire events and unburnt refuge areas within territories were an

important factor influencing site occupancy and post-fire site re-occupancy (Lindenmeyer et al. 2009, TSSC 2018).

10. Consultations

The Western Australian Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Energy and the Office of the Threatened Species Commissioner, and Professor Stephen Garnett were consulted in the development of this document.

11. Additional remarks

None.

12. References

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