

# NOISY SCRUB-BIRD (DJIMAALAP)

*ATRICHORNIS CLAMOSUS*

**STATUS: ENDANGERED**

**ESTIMATED WILD POPULATION: FEWER THAN 1500 INDIVIDUALS**

## A BIT ABOUT THE NOISY SCRUB-BIRD

The Noisy Scrub-bird, known by the Noongar people as Djimaalap, is a small, speckled brown, cryptic bird found only between a small area from Two People's Bay Nature Reserve and Manypeaks Nature Reserve on the South Coast of Western Australia. It is ground-dwelling and insectivorous, feeding on crickets, cockroaches, beetles, spiders, and larvae, and occasionally small frogs and lizards. Once thought to be extinct, it was rediscovered in 1961 near Albany. Having small wings, Djimaalap is functionally flightless, using rapid movements and short bursts of wing-assisted leaping to move between shrubs or across open ground. More often heard than seen, it is famous for its loud, melodious territorial calls—most commonly heard during the winter breeding season. Scientists monitor the species via their calls. Djimaalap is an ancient lineage of songbirds, with their closest relatives being lyrebirds. Genetic work suggests that the differentiation from lyrebirds was between 30 -35 million years ago, which effectively means that this special species is a Gondwanan relict, sometimes referred to as a 'living fossil'.

## WHERE DOES IT LIVE?

Djimaalap is found in dense, coastal vegetation on the south coast of Western Australia, with populations occurring between Two People's Bay Nature Reserve and Cheynes Beach, and on Bald Island. All populations outside of Two People's Bay Nature Reserve are a result of translocations. These birds inhabit low forest, scrub thicket, and heath—typically found in gullies and drainage lines of hills and granite mountains, as well as in lowland areas such as overgrown swamps, lake margins, and stream edges. They rely on thick understorey habitats that provide both cover from predators and suitable foraging grounds. Djimaalap occur in long-unburnt vegetation and are most abundant in areas more than ten years post-fire. Habitat quality and fire history are critical to their survival.

## HOW RARE IS IT?

Djimaalap is listed as Endangered under both WA and national legislation, as well as on the IUCN Red List. It is an exceptionally rare bird, with only a few small and isolated populations left in the wild. After being presumed extinct for more than 70 years, its rediscovery in 1961 sparked decades of dedicated recovery efforts. Today, there are thought to be around 500 singing territorial males and no more than 1500 individuals overall. Despite this, its small population size, limited range, and sensitivity to disturbance keep it at high risk of extinction.

## WHAT ARE ITS MAIN THREATS?

**Djimaalap faces several key threats to its continued survival:**

- Inappropriate fire regimes, which can destroy large areas of habitat and reduce understorey density essential for shelter and nesting.
- Predation by introduced species, particularly feral cats and foxes, due to its ground-dwelling and flight-limited nature.
- Historical habitat loss and fragmentation, which has cleared large areas of the species' critical coastal heathland habitat and limits dispersal and recolonisation of suitable sites.
- Habitat disturbance and degradation through weed encroachment and damage from introduced herbivores like cattle.
- Phytophthora dieback, which kills key plant species in heathland ecosystems, degrading important foraging and nesting habitat.
- Small population size, increasing the risk of population wipe outs from stochastic events such as disease or fire.

## HOW HAS IT MADE A COMEBACK?

**Guided by the South Coast Threatened Birds Recovery Team, Djimaalap has been the focus of intensive conservation efforts for over 50 years, resulting in a 10-fold increase in singing territorial males. Key recovery actions, led by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions in collaboration with project partners, have included:**

- Introduced predator control, targeting feral cats and foxes.
- Fire management and planning to protect important habitat areas.
- Translocations to re-establish or extend the species range.
- Protection of existing habitat through access control measures and dieback hygiene protocols.
- Research focused on the biology and ecology of the species to support its conservation and monitoring.
- Population monitoring to track changes in abundance and distribution over time.



© Alan Danks, Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

## WHAT DOES IT NEED NEXT?

**Despite its remarkable recovery, ongoing conservation management is required to ensure Djimaalap's long-term survival.**

**Key priorities include:**

- Continued protection of current and potential future habitat.
- Ongoing and intensified predator control for feral cats and foxes in both known and potential habitats.
- Further translocations to establish additional populations at suitable sites.
- Expanded monitoring and research to better understand population status, population health, genetics, and ecological needs.
- Increased community awareness and involvement to promote conservation actions and reduce human impacts.

## INTERESTED IN GETTING INVOLVED IN DJIMAALAP RECOVERY WORK?

**Contact Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions: [albany@dbca.wa.gov.au](mailto:albany@dbca.wa.gov.au)**

This fact sheet was supported by the Australian Government Natural Heritage Trust and is delivered by South Coast NRM, a member of the Commonwealth Regional Delivery Partners Panel, in partnership with local conservation organisations.