

December and lays four to five eggs; and is mostly sedentary, with local dispersals resulting from rainfall which stimulates production of food such as seeds (Collar 1997). The species declined to near extinction from 1880 through the 1920s, possibly because of habitat clearance, drought, or an epidemic, but recovered rapidly after 1930 (Collar 1997; Garnett and Crowley 2000). Numbers appear to be greatest in protected reserves, indicating that surrounding agricultural land may reduce foraging opportunities (Collar 1997). The size of the species' range is stable, and the area of population distribution within the range is increasing (Garnett and Crowley 2000).

Previous Federal Actions

The scarlet-chested parakeet and the turquoise parakeet of the genus *Neophema* are listed under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (Act) (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) as endangered throughout their entire ranges. The scarlet-chested parakeet was listed on December 2, 1970 (35 FR 18320). The turquoise parakeet was listed on June 2, 1970 (35 FR 8495). Both species were originally listed under the Endangered Species Conservation Act of 1969 (Pub. L. 91-135, 83 Stat. 275 (1969)) as part of a list of species classified as endangered. This list was absorbed into the current Act. The endangered listing under the Act prohibits imports, exports, and re-exports of the species into or out of the United States as well as interstate and foreign commerce. On July 1, 1975, the scarlet-chested parakeet was placed in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES; 42 FR 10465; February 22, 1977). On June 6, 1981, the turquoise parakeet was also added to CITES Appendix II. Listing in CITES Appendix II allows for regulated commercial trade based on certain findings. Furthermore, because no wild-caught specimens of these two species are in international trade, and they only occur in trade as captive-bred specimens, they were included in the approved list of captive-bred species under the regulations of the Wild Bird Conservation Act of 1992 (WBCA; 16 U.S.C. 4901-4916). Inclusion in this list allows for imports of these species without requiring a WBCA permit.

On September 22, 2000, we announced a review of all endangered and threatened foreign species in the Order Psittaciformes (parrots, parakeets, macaws, cockatoos, and others; also known as psittacine birds) listed under the Act (65 FR 57363). Section 4(c)(2) of the Act requires such a review at least

once every 5 years. The purpose of the review is to ensure that the Lists of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife (50 CFR 17.11) accurately reflect the most current status information for each listed species. We requested comments and the most current scientific or commercial information available on these species, as well as information on other species that may warrant future consideration for listing. If the present classification of species is not consistent with the best scientific and commercial information available at the conclusion of this review, we may propose changes to the list accordingly. One commenter suggested that we review the listing of these species and provided enough scientific information, including information and correspondence with Australian Government officials, to merit review of these species by the Service.

The Australian Government classifies the conservation status of the scarlet-chested parakeet as "Least Concern" and the turquoise parakeet as "Near Threatened." "Least Concern" indicates that the habitat in which the species occurs or the species' population density within the habitat has not declined by more than half of the size that it was a century ago. This is the lowest level of species risk. "Near Threatened" indicates that the habitat within the range and/or the size of the population within the available habitat is probably less than half of what it was a century ago. *The Action Plan for Australian Birds 2000* (Garnett and Crowley 2000), a strategic document produced by Environment Australia to recommend actions to government and non-government organizations in establishing national conservation priorities, includes recommendations for these species. The plan, however, is not a regulatory document, and the conservation priority for least concerned and near threatened birds is low (P. Blackwell, Environment Australia, pers. comm. with M. Kreger, DSA, 2002).

Commercial exports of these species from Australia have been prohibited since 1962. The prohibition is covered under Australia's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999. Although there are recommended actions for protection of both species under *The Action Plan for Australian Birds 2000* (Garnett and Crowley 2000), Australia has no recovery plan for either. Both species are, however, protected by State legislation and may not be trapped from the wild for commercial purposes (G. Maynes, Environment Australia, pers. comm. with M. Kreger, DSA, 2002). The 2000 IUCN (International Union for

Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) Red List of Threatened Species downlisted the scarlet-chested parakeet from vulnerable (facing high risk of extinction in the wild in the medium-term future, but not very high or extremely high) to lower risk/near threatened (taxa that do not qualify as Conservation Dependent, but which are close to qualifying as vulnerable). This status was maintained in the 2002 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. The turquoise parakeet is not included in the 2002 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

Summary of Factors Affecting the Scarlet-Chested Parakeet *Neophema splendida* and the Turquoise Parakeet *Neophema pulchella*

Section 4(a)(1) of the Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) and regulations promulgated to implement the listing provisions of the Act (50 CFR part 424) set forth five factors to be used in determining whether to add, reclassify, or remove a species from the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants. These factors and their applicability to populations of the scarlet-chested parakeet and the turquoise parakeet of Australia are as follows:

A. The Present or Threatened Destruction, Modification, or Curtailment of its Habitat or Range

Scarlet-Chested Parakeet

The scarlet-chested parakeet population has increased rapidly in favorable conditions such as increased rainfall (Collar 1997; Garnett and Crowley 2000), but habitat clearance has fragmented roosting and foraging habitat in southern South Australia and northwest Victoria. This species is frequently found in open agricultural areas during years of unusually high nest production likely due to competition among birds for optimal nest sites and foraging areas in forests. Thus, livestock grazing and burn management to clear land for agriculture may reduce habitat availability (Garnett and Crowley 2000). However, most of the species' foraging, roosting, and nesting habitat is outside agricultural areas, and the area over which the species flies is so vast (range exceeds 2,000 km²) that fires would not likely adversely affect a significant portion of the population (Snyder *et al.* 2000). *The Action Plan for Australian Birds 2000* (Garnett and Crowley 2000) recommends maintaining low fire frequency and grazing rates throughout the range of the species, particularly in protected reserves in Murray Mallee. It