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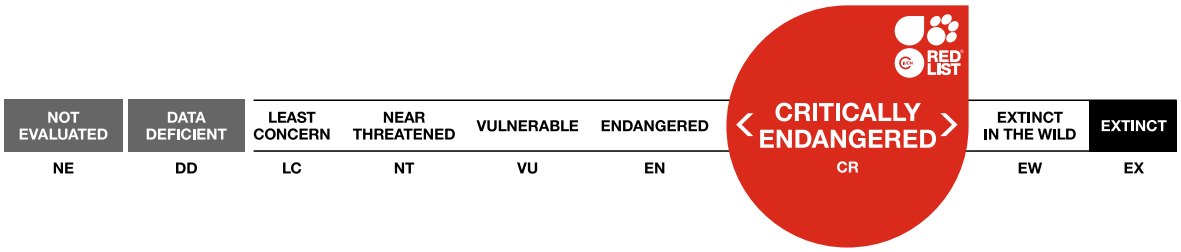
Scope(s): Global
Language: English

Ara ambiguus, Great Green Macaw

Assessment by: BirdLife International



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Taxonomy

Kingdom	Phylum	Class	Order	Family
Animalia	Chordata	Aves	Psittaciformes	Psittacidae

Scientific Name: *Ara ambiguus* (Bechstein, 1811)

Synonym(s):

- *Ara ambigua* (Bechstein, 1811) — BirdLife International (2004)
- *Ara ambigua* (Bechstein, 1811) — Stotz *et al*. (1996)
- *Ara ambigua* (Bechstein, 1811) — BirdLife International (2000)
- *Ara ambigua* (Bechstein, 1811) — Sibley and Monroe (1990, 1993)

Common Name(s):

- English: Great Green Macaw
- Spanish; Castilian: Guacamayo Ambiguo

Taxonomic Source(s):

SACC. 2005 and updates. A classification of the bird species of South America. Available at: #http://www.museum.lsu.edu/~Remsen/SACCBaseline.htm#.

del Hoyo, J., Collar, N.J., Christie, D.A., Elliott, A. and Fishpool, L.D.C. 2014. *HBW and BirdLife International Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World. Volume 1: Non-passerines*. Lynx Edicions BirdLife International, Barcelona, Spain and Cambridge, UK.

Identification Information:

85-90 cm. Very large, green macaw. Red frontal band above huge black bill. Bare facial area with black lines. Flight feathers blue above and olive below. Blue lower back. Orange tail. Facial lines more reddish in older (especially female) birds. **Voice** Loud squawks and growls, and a creaking *aaa* call (Ross and Whitney 1995; Jahn *et al*. 2002; Whitney *et al*. 2002; Krabbe and Nilsson 2003; Coopmans *et al*. 2004).

Assessment Information

Red List Category & Criteria: Critically Endangered A4abcd ver 3.1

Year Published: 2020

Date Assessed: August 7, 2020

Justification:

This species qualifies as Critically Endangered because extensive habitat destruction and capture for the cagebird trade are causing extremely rapid and continuing population declines. These threats have had such a significant impact that the total population is now very small.

Previously Published Red List Assessments

2016 – Endangered (EN)
https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2016-3.RLTS.T22685553A93079606.en

2013 – Endangered (EN)

https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2020-3.RLTS.T22685553A172908289.en

https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2013-2.RLTS.T22685553A48044192.en

2012 – Endangered (EN)

2008 – Endangered (EN)

2005 – Endangered (EN)

2004 – Vulnerable (VU)

2000 – Vulnerable (VU)

1994 – Unknown (LR/LC)

1988 – Unknown (LR/LC)

Geographic Range

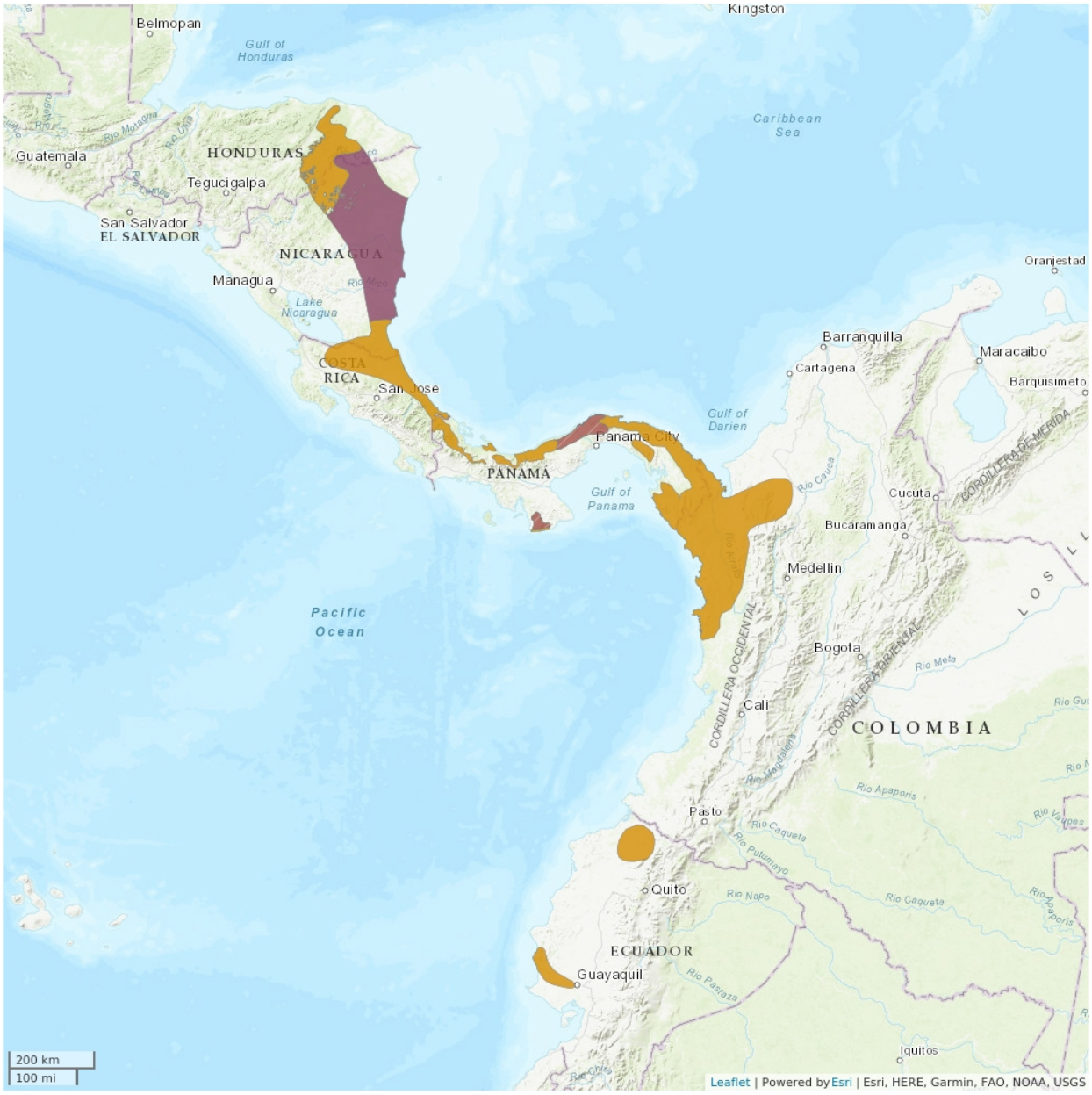
Range Description:

Ara ambiguus occurs as two subspecies. The nominate race occurs from **Honduras** to north-west **Colombia**, and the race *guayaquilensis* is endemic to western **Ecuador** (Fjeldså *et al*. 1987). In **Panama**, it is locally fairly common on the Caribbean slope and in Darién near Cana, Alturas de Nique (G. Angehr *in litt*. 1993, 2005; C. J. Sharpe *in litt.* 2011) and adjacent Colombia (P. Salaman *in litt*. 1999), and occurs in Serranía de Majé and south Cerro Hoya (Robbins *et al*. 1985). In Colombia, it is found in the Nariño and Chocó departments, with the stronghold being the Darién lowlands and Uraba forests east of the río Atrato and Serranía de Baudó (Fundacíon ProAves *in litt*. 2020). In Honduras, it is restricted to the Moskitia region and is now rare near the río Plátano (Snyder *et al*. 2000; Portillo-Reyes 2018). In **Nicaragua**, it persists in the Bosawas Reserve and the Indio-Maíz and San Juan Reserve (C. J. Sharpe *in litt*. 1999; O. Chassot verbally 2004). The Sarapiqui region in northern **Costa Rica** is one of the last strongholds for the species (S. Williams *per* S. Nazeri *in litt*. 2020). In Ecuador, the majority of the population is found in Esmeraldas and the Cordillera de Chongón-Colonche, Guayas (Snyder *et al*. 2000; Benítez 2002). However, within range its distribution is quite local, it being absent from several remote areas (G. Angehr *in litt*. 2005).

Country Occurrence:

Native, Extant (resident): Colombia; Costa Rica; Ecuador; Honduras; Nicaragua; Panama

Distribution Map

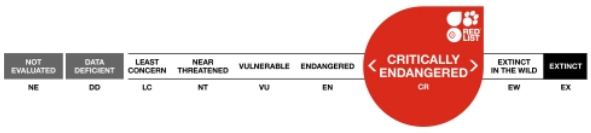


Legend

- EXTANT (RESIDENT)
- POSSIBLY EXTANT (RESIDENT)
- POSSIBLY EXTINCT

Compiled by:

BirdLife International and Handbook of the Birds of the World (2016) 2014



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply any official endorsement, acceptance or opinion by IUCN.

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Population

The species has a disjunct range and localised distribution. The population in Honduras currently numbers c. 400 individuals (H. O. Portillo Reyes *per* S. Nazeri *in litt*. 2020), which roughly equates to 260 mature individuals. The population in northern Costa Rica and southern Nicaragua numbered less than 200 individuals, equating to c. 130 mature individuals, in 2019 (Macaw Recovery Network 2019). In Ecuador, the species occurs in two disjunct subpopulations, with a total of up to 50-70 individuals, equating to 35-50 mature individuals, in 2020 (M. Moens *per* S. Nazeri *in litt*. 2020). In 2014, the population in Colombia was estimated at up to 1,700 mature individuals (Botero-Delgadillo and Páez 2011; Renjifo *et al*. 2014); however this is now considered an overestimate, with the true population size closer to 100 mature individuals (Fundación ProAves *in litt*. 2020). For Panama, recent population data is not available (B. Schmitt *per* S. Nazeri *in litt*. 2020). Based on these national numbers, the global population is now estimated to number at least 525 mature individuals; to account for uncertainty and an additional population in southern Panama, the global population is here placed in the band 500-1,000 mature individuals.

Trend Justification

The species is undergoing a decline caused by habitat destruction and capture for the cagebird trade. While the overall population in Ecuador numbered c. 60-90 individuals in 2002, it declined to 50-70 in 2020 (Benítez *et al*. 2002; E. Horstman and M. Moens *per* S. Nazeri *in litt*. 2020). This equates to a rate of decline of 34% over three generations for the national population in Ecuador. The subpopulation in Nicaragua and Costa Rica numbered 834 individuals in 2009, but was estimated at only up to 200 individuals in 2019 (Monge *et al*. 2010; Macaw Recovery Network 2019). This equates to a decline of 99% over three generations for Nicaragua and Costa Rica. Declines in Colombia further amount to at least 50-79% over three generations (Fundación ProAves *in litt*. 2020). There is no information on the rate of population changes in Honduras and Panama. In view of the threats that the species is facing, it is highly likely that the species is also undergoing rapid declines in these countries. Overall, the global population is estimated to decline at 80-99% over three generations.

Current Population Trend: Decreasing

Habitat and Ecology **(see Appendix for additional information)**

It inhabits humid and wet lowland, foothill and (in south-western Ecuador) dry deciduous forest (Benítez *et al*. 2002; Berg *et al*. 2007), but occurs in edge habitats and crosses open areas (Fjeldså *et al*. 1987; Juniper and Parr 1998). It is found mainly below 600 m, but occurs to 1,000 m and occasionally 1,500 m in Darién. In Costa Rica, it strongly prefers *Dipteryx panamensis* as principal nesting tree, with 87% of all active nests found on this tree (Macaw Recovery Network 2020); local movements may reflect the asynchronous fruiting of *Dipteryx panamensis* (Powell *et al*. 1995; Juniper and Parr 1998). Breeding pairs typically produce 1-2 chicks per breeding season (Macaw Recovery Network 2019). In south-western Ecuador, it breeds in June-November, and nests in cavities of dead *Cavanillesia plantanifolia* trees (Berg and Horstman 1996; López-Lanús *et al*. 1999). Orchids made up 71% of the diet of a pair watched in Ecuador, and their feeding range was estimated at 2,000 ha (López-Lanús *et al*. 1999). In the non-breeding season, it tends to form flocks that disperse over large distances in search of food (O. Chassot verbally 2004; O. Jahn *in litt*. 2004, 2005).

Systems: Terrestrial

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Threats (see Appendix for additional information)

In Central America, original vegetation is converted for agriculture, plantations, cattle-ranching and logging (Stattersfield *et al*. 1998; S. Nazeri *in litt*. 2020). *Dipteryx panamensis* is selectively logged in Costa Rica (Powell *et al*. 1995). Pineapple plantations are rapidly expanding and replacing tropical forest habitat in Costa Rica (S. Nazeri *in litt*. 2020). Annual deforestation rates are high throughout its range (FAO 2001). Deforestation in Panama probably exceeds 30% of its original range (G. Angehr *in litt*. 2005) and in some other countries (e.g., Costa Rica and Ecuador) the historical range was reduced by ~90 % over the past 100 years (Chassot *et al*. 2002; O. Jahn *in litt*. 2004, 2005). In its South American range, plans to colonise and develop remoter areas are progressing through infrastructural improvements, particularly the rapid expansion of the road network, which has increased the impact of logging, small-scale agriculture, illegal coca plantations, gold mining, and hunting, which is also affecting some key protected areas (Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund 2001; Álvarez 2002; Benítez *et al*. 2002). Large areas of western Ecuador are being purchased, denuded of forest and converted to industrial oil palm plantations (Sharpe 1999). Urbanisation and agriculture have largely extirpated race *guayaquilensis*, and it is reportedly shot as a crop-pest (Pople *et al*. 1997; Juniper and Parr 1998). There is illegal capture for (mostly internal) trade, food and feathers (Low 1995; Powell *et al*. 1995; Sharpe 1999; C. J. Sharpe *in litt*. 1999; Snyder *et al*. 2000; Benítez *et al*. 2002).

Conservation Actions (see Appendix for additional information)

Conservation Actions Underway

CITES Appendix I and II, and part of the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria's European Endangered [Species] Programme (EAZA). The stronghold is in Darién Biosphere Reserve, Panama, and adjacent Los Katíos National Park, Colombia. There are important reserves in all range states, but these provide insufficient protection for seasonal wanderers (Juniper and Parr 1998). The Macaw Recovery Network in Costa Rica implements conservation programmes such as species management, habitat protection and restoration, community outreach and behavioural change (S. Nazeri *in litt*. 2020). In Costa Rica, a proposed moratorium on logging *D. panamensis* has not yet been implemented (Powell *et al*. 1995; Snyder *et al*. 2000). A bi-national campaign in the lowlands of the San Juan River (Nicaragua and Costa Rica) aims to increase awareness of biology, threats and conservation, and strengthen management of natural resources (Chassot *et al*. 2006). A government-backed conservation strategy is being implemented in Ecuador (E. Horstman *in litt*. 2005). In 2007, a successful rapid assessment study in search of the last surviving individuals was carried out in the Cordillera Chongón-Colonche, Ecuador (O. Jahn *in litt*. 2004, 2005). Fundación Jocotoco is reintroducing the subspecies *guayaquilensis* in coastal Chongón-Colonche (M. Moens *in litt*. 2020). Habitat restoration utilizing native dry tropical forest species that are known or potential macaw food sources is being carried out in the Cerro Blanco Protective Forest, western Ecuador, by the Pro-Forest Foundation, with >250 hectares so far replanted with 35 native species (E. Horstman *in litt.* 2012). A biological corridor is being created to link the Cerro Blanco Protective Forest with remaining forest fragments in the Chongon Colonche Protective Forest (E. Horstman *in litt.* 2012).**Conservation Actions Proposed**

Implement population monitoring programmes (Benítez *et al*. 2002). Monitor rates of habitat loss and degradation. Quantify levels of persecution and capture for trade. Develop captive breeding programmes. Effectively protect reserves throughout the range (Snyder *et al*. 2000, Benítez *et al*. 2002; O. Jahn *in litt*. 2004, 2005). Designate the proposed Maquenque National Park, Costa Rica (Powell *et al*. 1995). In Ecuador, designate the Awá reserve, Cotacachi-Cayapas Ecological Reserve, Awacachi corridor, Gran Reserva Chachi, and Canandé Reserve, including the Río Santiago, Cayapas, Ónzole, and Hoja

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Blanca drainages, as a biosphere reserve (Benítez *et al*. 2002). Acquire private reserves in selected areas (López-Lanús *et al*. 1999; Sharpe 1999). Create a biological corridor linking forest remnants in the Cordillera Chongón-Colonche with the Cerro Blanco Protected Forest. Curtail trade through law enforcement and educational campaigns (J. Lyons *in litt*. 1998; C. J. Sharpe *in litt*. 1999; Benítez *et al*. 2002). Sustainably manage the buffer zones of key protected areas and reserves (Benítez *et al*. 2002). In Ecuador, efficiently guard all known nests during the entire nesting period to avoid the destruction of nesting trees and the collection of nestlings by poachers (O. Jahn *in litt*. 2004, 2005).

Credits

Assessor(s): BirdLife International

Reviewer(s): Fernando, E.

Contributor(s): Angehr, G., Benstead, P., Chassot, O., Derhé, M., Fundación ProAves, Harding, M., Horstman, E., Isherwood, I., Jahn, O., Lyons, J., Moens, M., Nazeri, S., Portillo Reyes, H., Salaman, P.G.W., Schmitt, B., Sharpe, C.J., Sharpe, C J, Stuart, T., Symes, A. & Williams, S.

Facilitator(s) and Compiler(s): Hermes, C.

Partner(s) and Institution(s): BirdLife International

Authority/Authorities: IUCN SSC Bird Red List Authority (BirdLife International)

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Disclaimer

External Resources

For Supplementary Material, and for Images and External Links to Additional Information, please see the Red List website.

Appendix

Habitats

(http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes)

Habitat	Season	Suitability	Major Importance?
1. Forest -> 1.5. Forest - Subtropical/Tropical Dry	Resident	Suitable	Yes
1. Forest -> 1.6. Forest - Subtropical/Tropical Moist Lowland	Resident	Suitable	Yes
14. Artificial/Terrestrial -> 14.6. Artificial/Terrestrial - Subtropical/Tropical Heavily Degraded Former Forest	Resident	Suitable	Yes

Use and Trade

(http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes)

End Use	Local	National	International
Food - human	Yes	Yes	No
Pets/display animals, horticulture	Yes	Yes	No

Threats

(http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes)

Threat	Timing	Scope	Severity	Impact Score
1. Residential & commercial development -> 1.2. Commercial & industrial areas	Ongoing	Minority (50%)	Slow, significant declines	Low impact: 5
	Stresses:	1. Ecosystem stresses -> 1.1. Ecosystem conversion 1. Ecosystem stresses -> 1.2. Ecosystem degradation		
2. Agriculture & aquaculture -> 2.1. Annual & perennial non-timber crops -> 2.1.4. Scale Unknown/Unrecorded	Ongoing	Majority (50-90%)	Rapid declines	Medium impact: 7
	Stresses:	1. Ecosystem stresses -> 1.1. Ecosystem conversion 1. Ecosystem stresses -> 1.2. Ecosystem degradation		
2. Agriculture & aquaculture -> 2.2. Wood & pulp plantations -> 2.2.2. Agro-industry plantations	Ongoing	Minority (50%)	Rapid declines	Medium impact: 6
	Stresses:	1. Ecosystem stresses -> 1.1. Ecosystem conversion		
2. Agriculture & aquaculture -> 2.3. Livestock farming & ranching -> 2.3.3. Agro-industry grazing, ranching or farming	Ongoing	Minority (50%)	Slow, significant declines	Low impact: 5
	Stresses:	1. Ecosystem stresses -> 1.1. Ecosystem conversion 1. Ecosystem stresses -> 1.2. Ecosystem degradation		
5. Biological resource use -> 5.1. Hunting & trapping terrestrial animals -> 5.1.1. Intentional use (species is the target)	Ongoing	Majority (50-90%)	Rapid declines	Medium impact: 7

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	Stresses:	2. Species Stresses -> 2.1. Species mortality		
5. Biological resource use -> 5.1. Hunting & trapping terrestrial animals -> 5.1.3. Persecution/control	Ongoing	Minority (50%)	Slow, significant declines	Low impact: 5
	Stresses:	2. Species Stresses -> 2.1. Species mortality		
5. Biological resource use -> 5.3. Logging & wood harvesting -> 5.3.3. Unintentional effects: (subsistence/small scale) [harvest]	Ongoing	Majority (50-90%)	Rapid declines	Medium impact: 7
	Stresses:	1. Ecosystem stresses -> 1.2. Ecosystem degradation		

Conservation Actions in Place

(http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes)

Conservation Action in Place
In-place research and monitoring
Action Recovery Plan: Yes
Systematic monitoring scheme: No
In-place land/water protection
Conservation sites identified: Yes, over entire range
Occurs in at least one protected area: Yes
Invasive species control or prevention: No
In-place species management
Successfully reintroduced or introduced benignly: No
Subject to ex-situ conservation: Yes
In-place education
Subject to recent education and awareness programmes: Yes
Included in international legislation: No
Subject to any international management / trade controls: Yes

Conservation Actions Needed

(http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes)

Conservation Action Needed
1. Land/water protection -> 1.1. Site/area protection
1. Land/water protection -> 1.2. Resource & habitat protection
2. Land/water management -> 2.1. Site/area management
3. Species management -> 3.4. Ex-situ conservation -> 3.4.1. Captive breeding/artificial propagation
5. Law & policy -> 5.4. Compliance and enforcement -> 5.4.2. National level

Research Needed

(http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes)

Research Needed
1. Research -> 1.4. Harvest, use & livelihoods
3. Monitoring -> 3.1. Population trends
3. Monitoring -> 3.4. Habitat trends

Additional Data Fields

Distribution
Continuing decline in area of occupancy (AOO): Yes
Extreme fluctuations in area of occupancy (AOO): No
Estimated extent of occurrence (EOO) (km^2): 1100000
Continuing decline in extent of occurrence (EOO): Unknown
Extreme fluctuations in extent of occurrence (EOO): No
Continuing decline in number of locations: Unknown
Extreme fluctuations in the number of locations: No
Lower elevation limit (m): 0
Upper elevation limit (m): 1,500
Population
Number of mature individuals: 500-1,000
Continuing decline of mature individuals: Yes
Extreme fluctuations: No
Population severely fragmented: No
No. of subpopulations: 6
Continuing decline in subpopulations: Unknown
Extreme fluctuations in subpopulations: No
All individuals in one subpopulation: No
No. of individuals in largest subpopulation: 251-1000
Habitats and Ecology
Continuing decline in area, extent and/or quality of habitat: Yes
Generation Length (years): 11.2

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Habitats and Ecology
Movement patterns: Not a Migrant

The IUCN Red List Partnership

The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™ is produced and managed by the IUCN Global Species Programme, the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) and The IUCN Red List Partnership.

The IUCN Red List Partners are: Arizona State University; BirdLife International; Botanic Gardens Conservation International; Conservation International; NatureServe; Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; Sapienza University of Rome; Texas A&M University; and Zoological Society of London.