

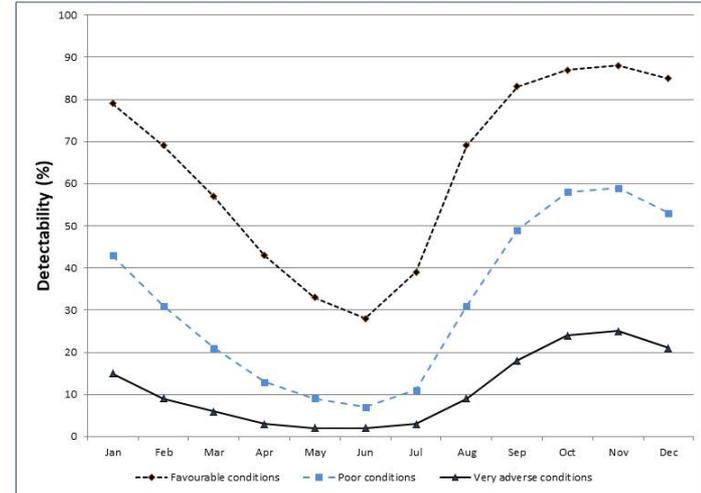
Status of Rufous Scrub-bird at Gloucester Tops, NSW

Mike Newman & Alan Stuart



The Ferrier Legacy (1981/82)

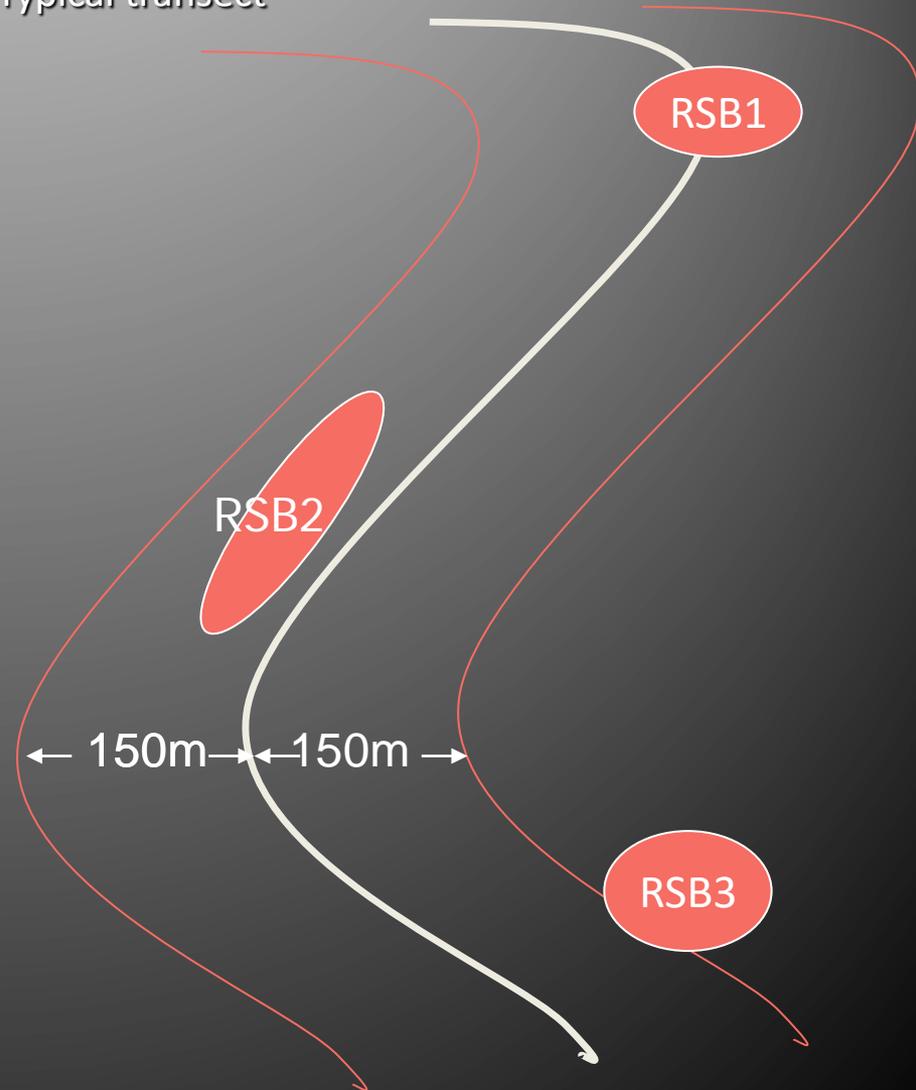
- Census method (territories of calling males)
- Southern sub-species *Atrichornis rufecens ferrieri*
- Population estimate for Gloucester Tops
- Variations in detectability by call
- Habitat requirements defined



Ferrier's Territory Search Approach

- Intensive Surveys 1981/82 at Gloucester Tops and Border Ranges
- 18 km of transects (along tracks and roads) surveyed on 18 days at each location
- All territories detected within 150m each side of transect
- RSB most easily detected between September and December
- Detection favoured by high humidity, good visibility and low wind

Typical transect

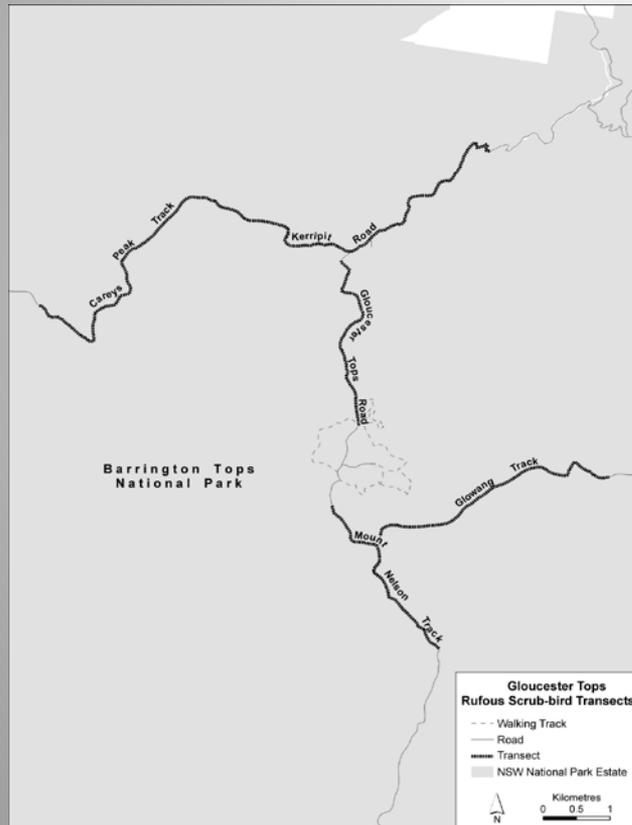


Replication 2010 - 2016

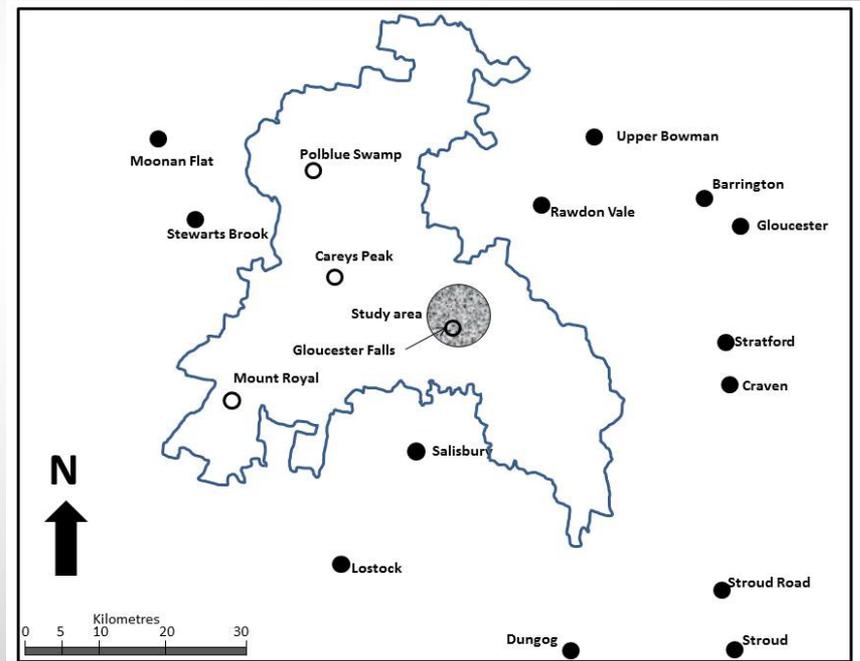
- >40 volunteers involved (mainly from HBOC)
- (c.1000 volunteer hours valued at \$50K)
- Trained to identify location of calling Scrub-birds (no call playback)
- Walked similar 1 km transects to Ferrier
- Two campaigns / breeding season (Sep. – Dec.)
- Trained team from Border Ranges working on northern Scrub-bird population.

The Gloucester Tops study area

Transects surveyed



Study area within KBA



Territories

- Male calls from a 50m diameter node
- Calls heard up to 150m from transect
- Records > 4 weeks apart define territory
- Permanent territories held for at least 3 years

Habitat

- Open forest with dense understory adjacent to *Nothofagus moorei* forest
- Passive management with reversion to rainforest
- Impact of drier conditions unclear
- Habitat may be less homogeneous

Wild fires a serious threat

- Seven year recovery period
- Following fires do dispersed birds dispute adjacent territories
- Have impacted other remnant Scrub-bird populations (e.g. Werikimbee)

Territories – Distribution and continuity of occupation

- 37 territories across 22 km of transects.
- 20 territories held in most years
- No territories in *Nothofagus moorei* forest
- Territories usually well separated (>350m apart)
- Territory clusters at three locations did not persist

Conclusions

- Density of territories (3.3 – 4.0 /km²) indicating 167 to 200 pairs in study area.
- Status almost unchanged over last 35 years, **but**:
- Not all territories advertised in dry years
- Study area in core habitat above 1100m
- Possibility of ongoing altitudinal retreat

The future

- Continued annual monitoring of subset of 11 transects
- Emphasis on monitoring continuity of territory occupation.
- Sufficient survey effort outside core area to establish presence/absence
- Repeat habitat classification studies made in early 1980s by Ferrier
- Consolidate monitoring studies across all five remnant populations

Acknowledgements

- Our marvellous volunteer team (c.1000 volunteer hours valued at \$50K)
- Staff of NSW Office of Environment and Heritage and the National Parks and Wildlife Service for their support; particularly Peter Beard and Shane Ruming
- Simon Ferrier for his pioneer study and encouraging our endeavours