Survival

For the orange-footed scrubfowl to survive, people must respect its natural behaviour.

With proper precautions, orange-footed scrubfowls can live in urban areas without destroying much-loved gardens.

Watching these birds build and take care of their mound is intriguing and can give people in the city an insight into the life of a unique Australian bird.

Since orange-footed scrubfowl chicks have to fend for themselves, the chances of survival are low.

Predators such as snakes, domestic cats and dogs, and in-ground swimming pools all make life hard for young orange-footed scrubfowls.

These birds, as is all native wildlife, are protected under the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 2000*. Thus it is illegal to trap or kill them.

Wildcare Inc is a non-profit organisation, which provides a support network for carers of sick, injured and orphaned wildlife in the Northern Territory. The primary objective is to rehabilitate and release these animals back into their natural habitat and to raise community awareness concerning the care and conservation of native animals.

For more information on Wildcare Inc or information provided in this fact sheet contact Wildcare at PO Box 464, Palmerston NT or phone (08) 89 886 121 or go to www.wildcarent.org.au.

❖ Wildcare Inc cannot be held liable for any information provided in this fact sheet

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LIVING WITH ORANGE-FOOTED SCRUBFOWL

We are extremely lucky to have
such a diverse group of native birds, mammals and reptiles living in our backyards. One native animal you may find is the megapod, Orange Footed Scrubfowl.

Orange Footed Scrubfowl

The orange-footed scrubfowl is a small-headed, chicken-like brown bird with powerful orange legs and feet. The head has a small upstanding crest. They have maniacal calls and screams that can carry some distance.

The birds wander through the undergrowth, scratching up the litter looking for insects, fruits, berries, seeds and shoots. When alarmed, they will usually noisily run off but, if necessary, they can fly clumsily into trees
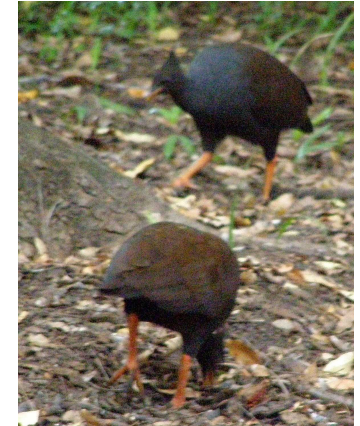
Orange footed scrubfowls are part of the family of birds called megapods. This means they make mounds of vegetation to incubate their eggs.

They form permanent pair bonds. Both birds work at building very large incubation mounds of soil and decaying plant matter. Some times more than one breeding pair can work on the mound at one time. The birds return and maintain the same mound over many years. Heat generated by the decaying material incubates the eggs. Breeding takes place from August to March.

No parental care is provided for the newly hatched chicks that are capable of flight within a couple of hours of digging themselves out of the mound.

Orange Footed Scrubfowls in your Garden

Many gardens in the tropics have environments very similar to the natural habitat of the orange-footed scrubfowl – dense trees and vegetation and plenty of moisture. Hence you will have these birds in your garden scratching and digging looking for food and suitable mound sites. This generally means the mulch gets thrown around, sprinkler systems disturbed and young plants dug up.

Things to do to minimise the damage

- Cover seedlings with metal mesh.
- Use coarse and heavy mulch like pebbles or crushed rock to protect the ground surface.
- Place logs or bricks around newly planted plants and over sprinkler lines.
- Develop your garden in stages.
- Don't feed orange-footed scrubfowls. Let them find their own food.
- Create a household compost mound for them to dig in & divert the birds to a less attractive area of your garden. This compost mound should be sited next to at least one large tree providing 80-95% shade.

- Interwoven large palm fronds laid over the mulch can deter the scratching
- Carpentaria palm seed berries and stalks (inflorescences) can be laid around your valuable plants. The scrubfowls seem to avoid these inflorescences.

Deterring mound building can be difficult, although a heavy tarpaulin spread over the developing mound and weighed down could be effective.