



Kimberley
Land Council



MEDIA RELEASE

Rare Gouldian finch found on Dampier Peninsula

A breeding population of the rare Gouldian finch, one of Australia's most endangered birds, has been found north of Broome by Indigenous rangers and environment groups.

In an exciting find for local conservation, the Bardi Jawi and Bard Jawi Oorany Rangers working with WWF-Australia and Environs Kimberley recently discovered several Gouldian finch populations on the Dampier Peninsula, highlighting the importance of continued conservation efforts in the rich, diverse region.

“We sighted the Gouldian finches a couple of weeks ago whilst undertaking weed control and decided we needed to have a concerted look in areas that we knew they had been seen before by our old people,” said Bardi Jawi ranger Trevor Sampi. “It was great to find more of them. We always knew they were there.”

The striking, vibrantly coloured species is now threatened across its entire range and less than 2,500 adult birds currently survive in the wild. The species also has very specific habitat requirements, both in terms of the plants it feeds on and the areas in which it breeds, making conservation of suitable habitats for the colourful, iconic finch vital.

“Now that we know this species is breeding on the Peninsula, we need to find out where they are breeding and whether there is anything we can do to halt the species' decline,” said Dr Alexander Watson, WWF-Australia's Kimberley Program Manager.

“It's exciting to be working with rangers and to find a breeding population of Gouldian finches utilising refuges such as monsoon vine thickets and un-burnt woodland. It shows how important it is to continue to care for land and improve fire management on the Dampier Peninsula,” said Louise Beames, Environs Kimberley Projects Coordinator.

Previously there have been few sightings on the Gouldian finch on the Dampier Peninsula, however, the recent field work by the Indigenous rangers revealed juvenile birds were among the population, marking it as a breeding ground.

Flocks of thousands of Gouldian finches have disappeared over the past 50 years. The reason for the decline is not known, although scientists hypothesise that altered fire regimes, cattle, and throat parasites are contributing factors. A large pet trade that captured and sold wild birds is also thought to have had a significant impact on finch numbers although it was banned in the mid-1980s.

Traditional knowledge and skills are playing an essential role in sustainable land management in the Kimberley. The Bardi Jawi Rangers continue to work on habitat conservation projects in the

area with WWF-Australia and Environs Kimberly. This partnership utilises local knowledge and cultural heritage to appropriately monitor and manage this striking endangered species.

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