

Gouldian Finch recovery plan for Kungarakan and Warai traditional lands in North Australia

Batchelor Institute
of Indigenous Tertiary Education
40th Birthday Celebrations
7th and 8th August 2014

Workshop Format

- 30 min - how my research took place
 - my focus on Indigenous values and how they sometimes differ from the emphasis placed on research by non-Indigenous researchers based on their value systems
- 20 min - participant discussion on topics
 - bird identification, habitat, food and shelter, monitoring practices and methods for promoting breeding and fire and land management.
 - participants talk about their personal experiences
- 10 mins - threatened flora and fauna
 - Coomalie Community Government Council region

Kungarakan and Warai – Our Land

- Traditional Country
- Land handed back under the “Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976”
 - Finniss River Land Trust
 - Wagait Land Trust
- Other land

Map provided by
Northern Land
Council - 2006

grey areas show
land in this map
area that has
been handed
back to
Aboriginal
people under the
Northern
Territory Land
Rights Act





- Opened in 1989
- Situated in Berry Springs, a 45 minute drive south of Darwin
- Key tourism attraction, showcasing biodiversity
- Top End's unique fauna and flora on display
- Covering a series of natural habitats and ecosystems
- Contributes to conservation by breeding threatened Species
- Delivers environmental education through interpretation and public and schools education

Source text & image - <http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/index.html>

Territory Wildlife Park

- Advised about Bird Life Australia Indigenous Research Grant by Shael Martin, Director Territory Wildlife Park
- Some Gouldian Finches on display at TWP





APPLICATION FORM

- INDIGENOUS GRANT FOR BIRD RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION

Caring for Our Country Program
Australian Government

Research Purpose

I had a number of aims in carrying out my research:

- Determine if there are gouldian finches currently on our Traditional Country and also how far away are the nearest gouldian colonies;
- Find out which habitats best suit the gouldian finch for living and breeding;
- Identify the native grasses, trees and other vegetation that need to be grown and in what groupings and distances apart to support groups of breeding populations of 250 plus;

Research Purpose

- Identify what types of water sources suit gouldians, and
- Identify if there are any strategies we could adopt to increase our chances of getting gouldians to flourish on our Traditional Country.

As part of the plan I wanted to assist Kungarakan and Warai people of all ages to increase their knowledge of gouldian finches so they could actively participate in ranger or other activities involved with gouldian finch conservation.

Gouldian Finches



Three Males - photo Sarah Pryke



Three females – WWF Blog – photo Sarah Pryke

Groups of adults and young Gouldians



Adults and young - photo M. Fidler



Adults and young
Save the Gouldian Fund website

Nesting boxes help promote breeding



Nesting boxes
Save the Gouldian Fund website



Nesting boxes in tree
Save the Gouldian Fund website

Save the Gouldian Fund

The screenshot shows the website's layout with a blue header, a navigation bar, and a main content area. The 'NEST-BOX PROJECT' section is prominent, featuring a close-up photo of a finch. The 'Hall of Fame' section lists names like Neil Pike, Gary & Colleen Howie, and others. Social media links for Facebook and Twitter are also visible.

Save the Gouldian Fund continued

About Us

Save The Gouldian Fund is a not-for-profit charity raising funds for the research and conservation of the Gouldian Finch, a highly endangered Australian bird.

Recent estimates suggest that less than 2500 Gouldian finches remain in the wild. Although once common throughout northern tropical Australia, this brightly coloured Australian bird is now almost extinct in Queensland and restricted to small and isolated populations in the Northern Territory and the Kimberley in Western Australia.

In contrast to the plight of this bird in the wild, the Gouldian finch's amazing plumage and amusing antics make it one of the most popular ornamental birds to be kept by aviculturists around the world. The aim of the Fund is to promote research into the Gouldian finch, and to provide conservation and management strategies to protect and promote wild Gouldian finches. The Fund also continually provides up-to-date information for bird breeders (from our current scientific research) to further enhance the practice of aviculture and the well being of all captive Gouldians throughout the world. Visit our news blog to receive details and updates on these projects.

We hope that you will all get behind us and help us help this iconic Australian species.

<http://savethegouldian.net/>

Many of the photos that I have used during my research to inform and educate people are from the SGF website

Results

- From speaking with people who have seen gouldian finches on our Traditional Country, I can confirm that gouldian finches currently live on our Country.
- A number of papers/reports indicated that gouldians prefer rocky hills during the dry season breeding period and wooded lowlands during the wet season.

Results

- They build their nests in smoothbarked tree hollows. The main trees they require are: snappy gum (*Eucalyptus brevifolia*), salmon gum (*Eucalyptus tintinnans*) or woollybutt (*Eucalyptus miniata*.)
- Some of the important native grasses are: cockatoo grass (*Alloteropsis semialata*), golden beard grass (*Chrysopogon fallax*), curly spinifex (*Triodia bitextura*), giant spear grass (*Heteropogon triticeus*) and annual spear grasses or native sorghum (*Sarga species*.)

Results

- Gouldians need to drink each day and they prefer clean water that has gently sloping access and some form of shelter from predators.
- Two strategies that are important in supporting the conservation of Gouldian finches are
 - (i) installing artificial nesting boxes as outlined in the paper “Provisioning habitat with custom-designed nest-boxes increases reproductive success in an endangered finch (James Brazill-Boast et al), and

Results

- (ii) instigating good fire management processes as outlined in the paper “Environmental factors influencing the establishment, height and fecundity of the annual grass *Sorghum intrans* in an Australian tropical savannah” (Kenneth A. Scott et al).

Woodcutters Mine Site - rehabilitation



Source - Newmont

Site status & locations Woodcutters, February 2010



Source - Newmont

Rum Jungle Mine

According to the Finniss River Land Claim report from 1981

- Mining operations began in 1954 and ended in 1963.
- Milling operations of stockpiled ore continued until 1971 when the operation was closed down and assets at the mine site were disposed of
- Rehabilitation was to be completed within 4 years
- After rehabilitation, land was to be handed back to Kungarakan & Warai
- **In the 2009/10 Federal Budget money was set aside to commence rehabilitation**
- **Budget papers stated that working with Traditional Owners would be part of the process**

Rum Jungle Project the site now



Info provided by Department of Resources – Tania Laurentont

Rum Jungle Project Rehabilitation Objectives

- Is safe for people and wildlife;
- Is chemically, radiologically and physically stable
- Has a significantly reduced contaminant load (associated with AMD travelling beyond the boundaries of the site);
- Supports sustainable land uses by traditional Aboriginal owners of the area with few, if any limitations; and
- Encourages beneficial post-rehabilitation land uses

Text provided by Department of Resources – Tania Laurentont

Other threatened species

“Climate Change Risk Assessment and
Adaptation Planning Coomalie Community
Government Council”

Report prepared in 29.11.10.

Other threatened species



Cycads
Cycas armstrongii

Other threatened species



Northern bandy-bandy
Vermicella multifasciata

Other threatened species



Grevillea Longicuspis

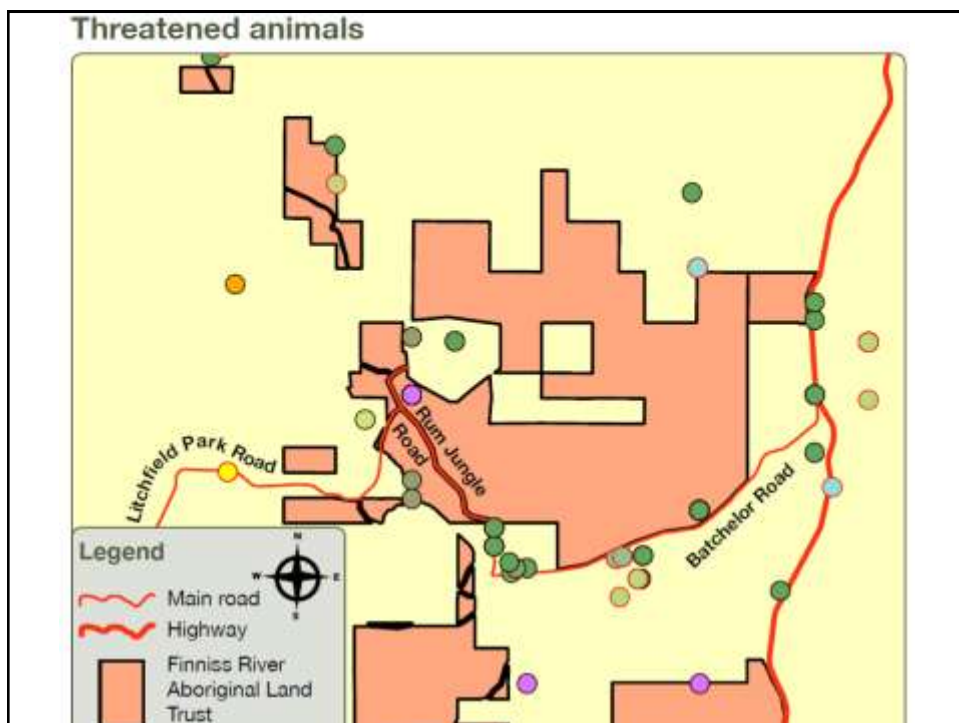
Other threatened species



Helicteres macrothrix Photo: Ian Cowie
previously Helicteres sp. Glenluckie Creek

Kungarakan & Warai Landcare Project Planning Project

- Funded by the Commonwealth of Australia
- Finnis River Land Trust & other areas eg the old Woodcutters and Rum Jungle mine sites.
- Issues such as critical threats to the environment and its woodlands including treating and eradicating weeds of national significance eg gamba grass and Mimosa; feral animal control, and working with threatened flora and fauna.



Up coming events

James Brazill-Boast one of the authors of the research document “Provisioning habitat with custom-designed nest-boxes increases reproductive success in an endangered finch” has volunteered to come to Darwin at the end of September.

Up coming events

- Meet with interested Kungarakan and Warai to look at country and to discuss the possibility of us building and then putting in nesting boxes in particular areas to see if we can increase breeding numbers.
- Possibility of visits to other areas for same purpose
- *Please let me know if you are interested in being involved.*

Having lunch during a Sacred Site Consultation - along Coach Road, Adelaide River - 2006



Thank you for listening
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