

Media Release:

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Endangered Bird Species Returns to Katherine

A flock of the endangered Gouldian finches has been located by the Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport (NRETAS) Parks and Wildlife Rangers, following reported sightings by the Katherine community.

NRETAS Senior Wildlife Ranger Melissa Farrelly said a flock of more than 23 finches with a mix of adult and juvenile birds and black-headed and red-headed varieties were recorded recently.

“The Gouldian finches were discovered on the outskirts of Katherine, feeding on seeds of the naturalised Sabi grass that is found in the area,” Ms Farrelly said.

“Gouldian finches were once thought to be a common bird in Katherine however population numbers have decreased steadily throughout Australia and they were listed as endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in 1992.

“We aren’t yet sure if the Gouldian finches have returned to Katherine because they have established a new population, or if they have been pushed out of their surrounding habitat due to some new threat.”

The observed population in the Katherine area is also consistent with reports of increases in other locations in the Northern Territory.

Ms Farrelly said Gouldian finches became endangered after a steep decline of population numbers in the 20th century due to a combination of factors such as disease, fire, habitat modification and invasive species.

“The food supply of Gouldian finches is severely depleted when hot dry season fires destroy seed banks,” Ms Farrelly said.

“Fires can easily destroy the tree hollows they nest in for habitat, and they face additional threats through competition for food from grazing animals.

“A National Recovery Plan is in place for the species with WWF, Federal, State and Territory Governments to save the Gouldian finch from possible extinction.

“I encourage the Katherine community to report any sightings of Gouldian finches to Parks and Wildlife, and if possible to include photos or GPS navigation points to assist us in identifying and locating the species.”

To report sightings of Gouldian finches contact Parks and Wildlife, Wildlife Operations Katherine by phoning 0407 958 405.

Ends

Media Note – for more information contact Melissa Farrelly on 0407 958 405

Images – Gouldian finches located by Parks and Wildlife in the Katherine region

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