

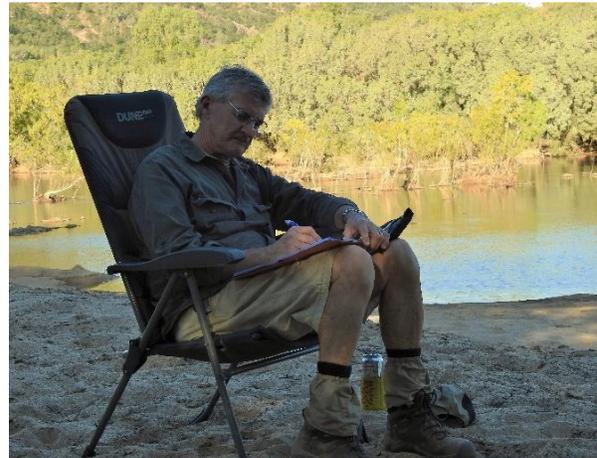
# North Queensland Gouldian Finch Study - Update July 2020

## Recent finch surveys

Lately our QCS-funded Gouldian surveys have focused on distribution and habitat, so I guess we are best described as Gouldian-seekers as opposed to Gouldian-keepers! This has involved cruising for Woodswallow flocks (particularly Black-faced with which Gouldians, Masked and Black-throated Finches have a strong association), and water holes in the better habitats.

We have found Gouldians on seven properties so far this year and confirmed successful nesting on four of these including one (Station H – I can never remember its name!) where they were last recorded about 20 years ago. Interestingly, one of the core sites at Station A is not so heavily frequented this year, perhaps reflecting the prolific grass seeding going on elsewhere in the wider landscape.

Property owners and managers have been most welcoming to date. We have settled on 6-day surveys lately and on the last two occasions people have been able to join or leave part way through as needed.



Grahame, Pippy and Patrick on grass ID crash course... No swim Bill till the data are up to date!



Dr Pamela Schultz leading grass training session (Left) and Gouldian male (Right).

### Upcoming surveys

We are looking to return to surveying starting the week of **3 August**. This will centre on three or four properties in the Chillagoe area, but exactly which parts of the properties will depend on alignment of permissions, fire, late mustering, road access, etc, and probably won't be set till the middle of week. We also need to check trail cameras in one of the core Gouldian areas.

### Interested?

Let me know if you are keen and your **timeframes of availability**. These are camping trips and we need to be fully self-sufficient. **New surveyors please send me details of whether you have any of 4WD, hand-held radios, sat phone, PLB/EPIRB, GPS or other mapping device (we are finding Avenza style apps reasonably reliable), camera (photographing habitat, birds), binoculars.** We will aim for two-people per vehicle, COVID-19 permitting, and vehicle owners reimbursed for dirt road mileage.

Things that I will then send you are:

1. The over-all plan – including equipment list, safety, biosecurity, etc.
2. Survey methods, grass ID guide, data sheets.
3. Confidentiality agreement (non-disclosure of sites) and sign on form, etc. for you to complete before embarking.
4. Details of next trips.

### Doing your own surveys?

Some of you who have been on the formal surveys are now doing your own surveys which is great, and we can suggest many currently unsurveyed areas to visit. Just be aware though that it would be outside the NQNHG project and insurances, so you would be on your own with risk assessments, insurance, and need to get property permissions etc. Be aware of the increased traffic including cattle trucks these days. If you do undertake personal surveys, please record results as per data sheets for the project.

### Next year

If the surveys along dry and dusty roads and tracks are not your cup of tea, don't worry as we will be doing some more intensive follow-up work in the Wet season and post Wet next year involving less driving. This is intended to help address some of our key questions re foods leading up to the breeding season and gather better data on breeding than we secured during this COVID-disrupted year. We'll also start preparing material for publication and participants will have the opportunity to be co-authors.

Ray Pierce 25 July 2020

