



Black-throated Finch Trust

Classroom Worksheet Years 11-12

Develop a management program

Overview

There are over 400 endangered animals in Australia. The Black-throated Finch is one of them. A number of elements are needed for the birds to thrive. Students will participate in an activity that helps them understand what environmental factors need to be present for the birds to have a healthy habitat.

Estimated Time

15 hours

Objectives

The students will be able to:

1. Learn what makes a good habitat for Black-throated Finches.
2. Understand what people can do to protect and create habitat.
3. Understand what threatens habitat and the Black-throated Finch.
4. Communicate good land management practices to the public.

Background

The southern sub species of the Black-throated Finch is endangered. This means it is facing a *high risk* of extinction in the wild. For more information refer to the Black-throated Finch flyer or landholder Management Guidelines available on www.blackthroatedfinch.com or www.nqdrytropics.com.au. See the Australian Government Black-throated Finch information webpage for general information about the bird <http://tiny.cc/wgyha>.

In this activity students will adopt the role of a land manager in charge of maintaining habitat, balancing this with their other responsibilities in the role. They will do this by developing a management plan that identifies the natural assets of a site, its design, current land management practices, current and future development and monitoring strategies. Property management plans are useful for keeping track of natural resources on properties, property design and management practices.

For more information on land management plans, otherwise known as property management plans, see the Department of Environment and Resource Management website www.derm.qld.gov.au/propertyplanning/index.html.

There is also a land management plan template on the schools section of the NQ Dry Tropics website. How much detail you require from students is up to you.

A field trip to a known Black-throated Finch habitat site is useful preparation for this exercise. The Townsville City Council has great facilities for this activity at its Oak Valley Nature Reserve, about 20 minutes from Townsville. It is easily accessible by buses and has a shed where classroom activities can be held, trails and a viewing platform. To make sure trails are open call the Council's environment management officer Alma Ridep-Morris on 4727 8947 or email alma.ridep-morris@townsville.qld.gov.au. For habitat areas outside of Townsville contact your local BirdLife Australia group. You can do this by visiting www.birdlife.org.au/locations. Useful references for this activity can be found on the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities' website www.environment.gov.au/

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Activity

1. Students chose to adopt a role: a developer, a grazier or a park ranger.
2. Chose a scenario below that matches the role you have adopted:

- **Developer:** You have been tasked with building a small shopping precinct on the edge of a new development; however the ideal building site is open bushland and known to be good habitat for Black-throated Finches.

You need to develop the area but maintain enough habitats to make it viable for Black-throated Finches and other wildlife in the area. The company you work for needs to protect its public image - which is already at stake because there's opposition to further development on the site.

Write an in depth management plan showing how you will protect Black-throated Finch habitat. Follow it up with communications for the public demonstrating how the company is protecting the Black-throated Finch. Communications could be a media release, media launch and advertisements in the local paper and/or invitations to stakeholders to participate in a guided tour of the property.

- **Grazier:** You want to subdivide your property into more paddocks so you can rotate cattle and reduce grazing pressures across the property. This will allow you to rest some paddocks during the wet season so they regenerate.

The problem is to do this you need to install new fences and watering troughs on 30 hectares of land that is prime Black-throated Finch habitat. You need to install new infrastructure while preserving Black-throated Finch habitat.

Write an in depth management plan that shows how you will achieve this preservation. You are proud of the property's Land for Wildlife status and you want to retain that. Follow the plan up with some form of

communications to the public that demonstrates your good work. This could be in the form of a sign outside of your property facing the road, an article for an industry magazine or local paper and/or a field day on site.

- **Park ranger:** You have the responsibility to manage a national park. There's a particular area of the park that's under increasing pressures from weeds and feral pigs. Their presence puts a strain on the populations of Black-throated Finches that live in the area.

There are impenetrable stands of woody weeds that can only be controlled with mechanical means; however you need to look out for some nearby native species of eucalypts that Black-throated Finches nest in.

Your manager has also asked you to do controlled burns through the area to reduce fuel loads. You need to rehabilitate the bush while protecting the habitat for the Black-throated Finch and other wildlife. Write an in depth management plan that shows how you will protect and improve Black-throated Finch habitat.

Follow up with communications that demonstrate good land management to the public. This could be in the form of signage throughout the park, an article in an industry newsletter and/or a case study on the national park's website.

Communications for each of these activities needs to raise awareness about the plant species that are preferred by Black-throated Finches. Communications should also acknowledge how Traditional Owners used the grass or tree species. For more information see the NQ Dry Tropics website www.nqdrytropics.com.au.