

BLACK-THROATED FINCH (*POEPHILA CINCTA CINCTA*)

ENDANGERED SPECIES

WHAT IS A BLACK-THROATED FINCH?

Appearance

The Black-throated Finch is a small, stocky bird with a grey head and thick, black beak. Its body is shades of cinnamon brown and it has a neat black bib on its throat. Black-throated Finches grow to 10 centimetres long.

There are two subspecies of the Finch; the northern and southern. The northern subspecies has a black rump and the southern subspecies has a white rump. This fact sheet covers the southern subspecies.

Preferred habitat

The birds like open eucalypt, melaleuca and acacia woodlands. They typically feed and breed near water.

Reproduction

Black-throated Finches appear in pairs and small flocks. They live in colonies and their grass nests are dome shaped. Nests may be built in the outer branches of trees, in tall shrubs, tree hollows and mistletoe and in the base of raptor nests. They lay five or six eggs each year and live for up to six years.

The main breeding season for the Black-throated Finch is October to April, depending on the season and location.



Photo courtesy of Kim Maute

What does it eat?

Black-throated Finches feed on the ground on the fallen seeds of grasses and herbs. They live in areas where seed is available all year round. During the early wet season seed supply can be scarce.

Where does it live?

The original range of the Black-throated Finch is from north east New South Wales to north Queensland but its range has contracted by as much as 80% since the 1960s. It is thought that the population has declined dramatically since the 1980s.

Most recent sightings of the bird have been near Townsville and east central Queensland.

Conservation status

We are close to losing the Black-throated Finch. Nationally it is declared an endangered animal. This means it is facing a very *high risk* of extinction in the wild.



DID YOU KNOW?

SHARING THE LOAD Male and female Black-throated Finches share house and child rearing responsibilities. Mum and dad work together to build the nest, sit on the eggs and feed the chicks.

Photo courtesy of Greg Calvert

What threatens the Black-throated Finch?

Threats include altered fire regimes, increased grazing pressure (from domesticated and non-domesticated animals) and native vegetation clearing. Other problems include predation by feral animals, introduced plants and animals and woody vegetation thickening. Trapping of the birds is also a concern. In the past trapping was legal; it is now illegal. Urban development is also encroaching on Black-throated Finch habitat.

Why protect the Black-throated Finch?

The southern subspecies of the Star Finch is already thought to be extinct in Queensland. Gouldian Finches are also rare. Let's not lose more. Finches contribute towards biodiversity and they are indicators of a healthy environment.

What is happening to look after the Black-throated Finch?

The Black-throated Finch Recovery Team was set up in 2004. It developed a plan for the recovery of the Finch and established a database to record sightings. The Team also coordinates a count each year to monitor populations.

A Black-throated Finch Trust was setup. Stockland Development Pty Ltd is funding the Trust over six years. Members on the Trust committee include the Black-throated Finch Recovery Team, Townsville City Council, Stockland and the Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM). The Trust has funded a number of projects including the development of guidelines about how to look after Black-throated Finch habitat. Community-based natural resource management groups like NQ Dry Tropics are also working to protect its environment.

HOW CAN I HELP?

It all starts with looking after the places where the Finch lives and encouraging restoration of habitats.

Implement management guidelines on your property. Guidelines are available from www.blackthroatedfinch.com or call NQ Dry Tropics on 4724 3544 for a copy. These guidelines are for developers, people on semi rural and rural properties and local and state governments.

You can volunteer in activities that help track the number of Black-throated Finches like the annual count. See www.blackthroatedfinch.com for details about the count and other information about the Black-throated Finch. You can also contribute financially to the Black-throated Finch Trust to support larger projects for conservation. Your donations go a long way to looking after valuable habitat.

This fact sheet was made possible thanks to the Black-throated Finch Trust.

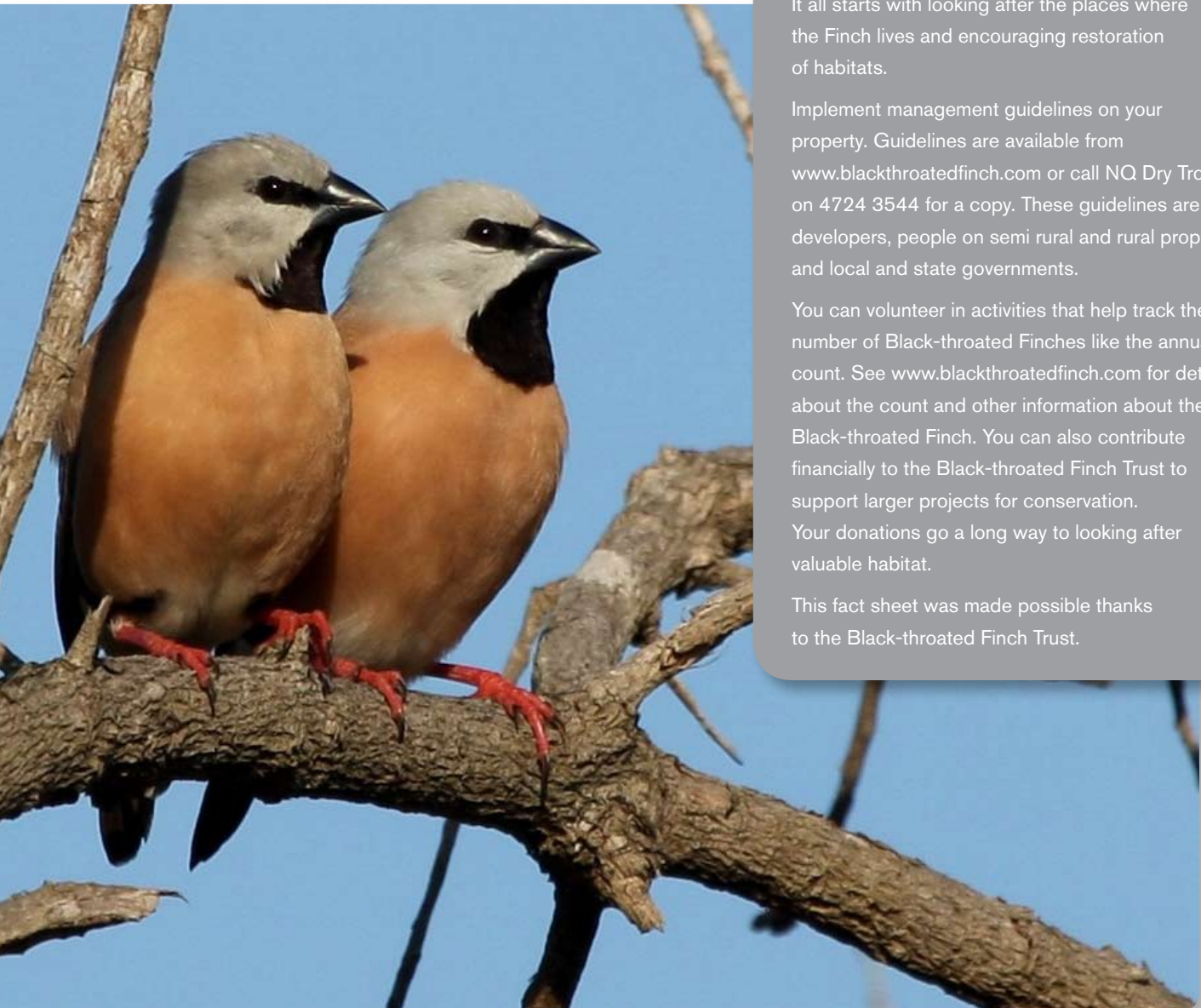


Photo courtesy of RA @ AM Sutton