



FACT SHEET

- In accordance with data provided with the Gouldian Finch Recovery Program (Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory) the habitat of the Gouldian Finch in Northern Australia extends from the Western Australian coast to Queensland.
- Of the 1420 km of New Railway between Alice Springs and Darwin 14 km (0.98%) have been identified by specialists as potential Gouldian Finch Wet Season feeding habitat
- Gouldian Finches do not feed in the area close to the Railway Corridor during the Dry Season - it is now the Dry Season in the Northern Territory of Australia.
- ADrail commenced the development of an Environmental Management Plan for the Gouldian Finch Wet Season Feeding Habitat in May 2001
- ADrail voluntarily offered to prohibit any activities in the 14 km of corridor during the Wet Season 2001/2002 and rescheduled earthworks activities in this area to avoid disruption of the feeding sites. Earthworks clearing was commenced in April 2002. ADrail voluntarily restricted the clearing at 11 marked drainage points to significantly less than normally allowed for construction.
- The incursion into the marked areas was voluntarily reported by ADrail to the Parks and Wildlife Commission Northern Territory so that the impact could be assessed by experts appointed by the NT Government.
- With respect to the area inadvertently impacted in clearing operations, Parks and Wildlife has reported 0.64ha in excess of that agreed. Topsoil in this area was not removed and a representative of Greening Australia has inspected the area and informed ADrail that root stock has not been severely impacted over the entire area. The affected area is a small percentage of the total feeding habitat in the Edith River area.
- ADrail utilised a "swamp bulldozer" in its clearing operations because this equipment is designed to exert minimum ground pressure and compaction. Compacted soil and increased likelihood of high surface soil salinity are not anticipated as compaction of granitic sands is almost impossible and the Northern Territory Department of Infrastructure Planning and Environment has advised that there is no rising saline ground water tables between Mataranka and the marine coast of the NT.

- ADrail established contact with Greening Australia in October 2001 to identify seed stocks for rehabilitation purposes and Greening Australia has confirmed that it has suitable seed available for planting out in time for this Wet Season (2002)
- The Aboriginal Community at Kybrook was contracted by ADrail and has collected enough viable seed to rehabilitate 5ha of the feeding habitat including the impacted area.
- The Community is also going to assist in the gathering of 100kg of Cockatoo Grass for sowing later in the year by ADrail in cooperation with the Pine Creek Community Council at well-established Gouldian Finch feeding sites at Pine Creek.
- It is accepted by all the parties involved that there is no loss of grass species in the area affected.
- Mr Lewis had previously advised the Environmental Advisory Group that fires through the region were the greatest threat to the future of the Gouldian Finch.
- The railway corridor thus far has acted as a fire-break for fires burning with the prevailing wind from the south east and prevented the loss of much grass on the western side of the corridor.
- ADrail has undertaken to implement the rehabilitation plan provided by the Northern Territory Department of Infrastructure Planning and Environment.
- While it has been stated that the area has been impacted to such an extent that there is a threat that Gouldian population numbers may be reduced to below critical sustainable levels, it is accepted that the extent of any such threat is not clear cut and subject to debate. Given the very small area affected and the rapid recovery of the grasses, loss of the population is an unlikely outcome. It has been agreed by all parties that emphasis should be on the re-establishment of the feeding habitat before the onset of the next wet season.