

BIRDLIFE NORTHERN QUEENSLAND
SURVEY OF THE GOLDEN BOWERBIRD
NEWSLETTER No. 1.

Thank you for expressing interest in the BirdLife Northern Queensland Golden Bowerbird Surveys.

Background

Climate change modelling has predicted that the Wet Tropics may become drier and warmer in the future. As a consequence of this change, it is thought that species restricted to higher altitudes of the region may need to move upslope to maintain the same environmental condition. Based upon his widespread, long term survey Steve Williams reports that his modelling puts the Golden Bowerbird second on a list of species in danger. First on this list is a frog that is already extinct.

Long term studies by the Friths in Paluma and Graham Harrington, David Westcott & Gerry Borgia on the Atherton Tablelands have shown that the positions of the bowers of Golden and Tooth-billed Bowerbirds can remain constant for 30 years or more. This is achieved by birds competing for existing bower sites rather than setting up new bowers in new positions. Such constancy makes it relatively easy to check on the presence of the bowers once we have their lat/longs on record.

For the last 10 years BirdLife Northern Queensland has had a project to locate the bowers of both species. We now have a database of around 50 Golden and 400 Tooth-billed bowers. Tooth-billed Bowerbirds are perhaps ten times more common than Golden Bowerbirds.

We have located Golden Bowers stretching from Mt Finnigan in the North to Lake Koombooloomba in the South. All but 3 of these bowers are above 995m.

Golden Bowers (50 records)
Max altitude – 1281m (Mt Fisher)
Avge altitude – 1153m
Min altitude – 635m (Butchers Creek)

We have located Tooth-billed Courts from Mt Finnigan in the North to Mt Halifax in the South.

Tooth-billed Courts (400 records)
Max altitude – 1385m (Mt Fisher)
Avge altitude – 912m
Min altitude – 423m (Black Mtn Rd, Kuranda)

