Southern Gulf Catchments

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 12 June 2008

Grasswrens in the Spinifex

In July, volunteers from Birds Australia will survey the Greater Mount Isa region for two rarely seen species of bird, the Kalkadoon and Carpentarian Grasswrens. These two species are only found in Spinifex grassland. Because Spinifex burns regularly the survey aims to find out how the birds cope with fire. The volunteers will be recording birds within firescars of up to ten years old. Ecologist Dr. Graham Harrington of CSIRO and Birds Australia said, "Fire is pro-biodiversity – it creates a diversity of habitats. We are interested in establishing the ideal fire regime for these and other wildlife species. Eventually we would like to find out what happens to the individual birds in a fire. Where do they migrate to and how long before they or other individuals come back".

All throughout July, the volunteers from all over Australia will be assigned fire scars where they will use recorded bird calls on MP3 players in order to entice the Grasswren species to show themselves

Southern Gulf Catchments is able to produce satellite maps of properties and sites of interest and will contact the property managers for consultation and participation. "This research project would not be possible if it weren't for the sponsorship of Xstrata and Mount Isa Water and the donated time of Birds Australia and their volunteers," says Southern Gulf Catchments' project manager Mark Van Ryt.

If anyone would like to know more about the surveys, the Greater Mount Isa Fire Management project or participation, feel free to contact Mark Van Ryt at Southern Gulf Catchments 07 4743 1888 or Dr. Graham Harrington at CSIRO 07 4096 5051.

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