Southern Gulf NRM

MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Grasswren continues to thrive in fire-affected landscapes

The 2025 Carpentarian Grasswren survey, conducted by BirdLife Northern Queensland volunteers and the Muu Tjaa Kalkutungu Warriors Traditional Owners, has confirmed that populations of the endangered bird remain stable across the region, even after the major wildfires of 2023 and 2024.

The surveys were made possible through the support of landholders, Traditional Owner rangers, volunteers and funding from Glencore Queensland Metals' Community Assistance Grants.

Fifteen volunteers and rangers completed surveys across more than 90 sites north of Mount Isa. The results were encouraging, with Carpentarian Grasswrens found at nearly 80% of previously monitored sites and new populations discovered even in fire-affected country.

While breeding numbers were lower this year, the survey shows the species continues to hold on strongly despite tough seasonal conditions.

The Carpentarian Grasswren is not only significant for biodiversity—it is also a key driver of eco-tourism in North West Queensland. Birdwatchers from across Australia travel specifically to this region for the chance to glimpse the elusive species, often as part of guided tours. Their visits provide a valuable economic boost for local towns through spending on accommodation, dining and fuel.

Lyndy Skea, Southern Gulf NRM Environment Team Leader, said the results highlight both the resilience of the species and the value of community-driven conservation.

"The Carpentarian Grasswren is part of our natural heritage and a unique attraction for birdwatchers. Protecting it keeps our region on the map and brings new opportunities for local tourism," Mrs Skea said.

BirdLife Northern Queensland survey leader, Kath Shurcliff, said long-term monitoring will remain vital.

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“We now know that the Carpentarian Grasswren can survive major fire events, but the decline in breeding success reminds us how important habitat management is for their long-term survival,” Kath Shurcliff said.

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Photo credit: BirdLife Northern Queensland

Photo credit: Muu Tjaa Kalkutungu Rangers

Photo credit: Clint Hook

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Southern Gulf NRM is the Natural Resource Management organisation for the Southern Gulf region of north west Queensland. We work with the community to deliver projects that improve and protect our region's natural resources and to maintain the prosperity of industries that rely on these. The Southern Gulf water catchment region includes all the land whose creeks and rivers run into the southern Gulf of Carpentaria. This encompasses an area of 215,000km square^2.