



Media release

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Research uncovers life of elusive finch

New research has shed light on the secret life of the elusive Crimson Finch, a bird once common in central Queensland, but now fighting for survival.

The Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA) funded research by Central Queensland University (CQU) to learn more about the Crimson Finch and how to look after it.

FBA Biodiversity Coordinator Graham Lightbody said the research would help improve conservation efforts to ensure the bird's survival.

He said a fact sheet on the finch was available from the FBA office by phoning 4999 2800, or via the website at www.fba.org.au.

Crimson Finches are also known as 'blood' finches. The male and female birds sport bright red faces and tails, and the males also have a crimson chest.

The finch is now only found at scattered sites within a range of 100km from the lower Isaac River to the lower Connors, Funnel Creek and their tributaries.

CQU Research Officer Wayne Houston said that while there was still more to learn, the research uncovered some possible reasons for the finch's decline.

"Factors such as heavy grazing along river areas have affected finch numbers and distribution," Mr Houston said.

"They are usually found near major streams with healthy vegetation along the banks, especially Chionachne, also known as River or Cane Grass – the seeds of which provide their main food source.

"If cattle graze the grass during the wet season, it can mean the plant won't produce enough seed to sustain the finches in the dry season.

"We also found that Crimson Finches live in small family groups up to about 15 birds and build nests in trees along the river margins.

"They have up to five or six chicks and in the right conditions can probably breed more than once a year."

FBA and CQU are continuing their research into the Crimson Finch to gain a better understanding of their population, food and habitat requirements, and to develop guidelines for grazing and fire management. If members of the public spot a bird that looks like the Crimson Finch, they are encouraged to contact Wayne Houston on 49309087.

For further information or interviews contact: Jody McDonald, Media and Communications Co-ordinator, 4999 2816, 0429 992 808, jody.mcdonald@fba.org.au.

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