

The Graham Harrington Research Scholarship 2020 Awardee

Gary Wilson

We are pleased to report that the 2020 Graham Harrington Research Scholarship was awarded to Nigel Jackett, a PhD candidate at University of Queensland. Nigel is known to many of us as the Warden at the Broome Bird Observatory. He submitted an excellent application with strong support from his Supervisors, Dr Steve Murphy and Professor James Watson.

The Northern Masked Owl (NMO) (Tyto novaehollandiae kimberli) is listed as Vulnerable under the EPBC Act, Vulnerable in Queensland and the Northern Territory, and Priority 1 in Western Australia. The Northern Masked Owl is considered to have three, potentially disjunct, populations, in north-east Queensland, the Top End and the Kimberley. The taxonomic status of the north-east Queensland Northern Masked Owl population remains uncertain, but is currently considered a distinct subspecies, the 'Cape York Masked Owl' (Tyto novaehollandiae galei).

The primary aim of this study is to improve the conservation outlook for the Northern Masked Owl by addressing previously identified research priorities. These priorities include a better understanding of the ecology of the Northern Masked Owl, enabling us to determine what processes are threatening the owl, its habitat, and its prey; developing robust and repeatable methods of detection; and clarifying its distribution and status.



Nigel Jackett, recipient of the 2020 BirdLife Northern Queensland, Graham Harrington Research Scholarship.

The first paper from his study has already appeared:

Jackett NA, Murphy SA, Leseberg NP, Watson JEM. 2020. A review of vegetation associated with records of the Masked Owl *Tyto novaehollandiae* in north-eastern Queensland. *Australian Field Ornithology* 37: 184-189.



Nigel is interested in any sightings of Masked Owls in North Queensland to assist with his research, so feel free to get in touch if you are able to help in this regard, or would like to find out more about the Masked Owl research.

Nigel is also looking for any willing participants, who might have either Barn or Masked Owls on their property, to assist the research by putting out one or more sound recorders (song meters) that he can provide for up to six months to try to record owl calls.

He can be contacted at:
n.jackett@uq.edu.au