PhD Opportunity: Reintroduction of Purple-crowned Fairy-wren (*Malurus coronatus*) in northern Australia.



The Research Institute for the Environment and Livelihoods (RIEL) and Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC) are seeking applicants for an exciting PhD project that will work on the upcoming AWC reintroduction of Purple-crowned Fairy-wren (*Malurus coronatus*) to Bullo River Station. This project is an exciting opportunity to work with a leading conservation organisation and help better understand and inform reintroduction projects for the threatened fairy-wren.

Scholarship and financial support:

Domestic applicants can apply for an RTP Domestic PhD Scholarship. If successful, this would include:

- CDU RTP stipend ($35,489 per annum from 2026, indexed annually and tax exempt if studying full-time), for up to 3 years from commencement. Open to Australian citizens/residents or New Zealand citizens (domestic students).
- RTP Fee Offset (full tuition fee waiver) for 3 years.
- Student allocation for research operating costs in line with university policies.
- University relocation allowance (up to $2000) may be available for eligible applicants.
- In-kind support from AWC where the PhD project aligns with the primary research questions.

About the project:

This project will work on the upcoming AWC reintroduction of Purple-crowned Fairy-wren (*Malurus coronatus*) to Bullo River Station. Bullo River Station has a conservation partnership with AWC, where 141,596 ha of the property is managed for conservation by AWC in a Special Management Zone.

The goal of the translocation is to establish a demographically viable, genetically diverse population of the western subspecies of Purple-crowned Fairy-wren on the station.

The western subspecies of the Purple-crowned Fairy-wren is listed as Endangered nationally and as Vulnerable in the Northern Territory. The subspecies has undergone substantial declines across its range, primarily driven by deterioration and loss of habitat caused by introduced herbivores, weed encroachment and wildfire.

If the translocation is successful, it will result in the establishment of a self-sustaining population of the Purple-crowned Fairy-wren that contributes to the regional recovery of the species. Monitoring of the reintroduction will help inform the design and conduct of future translocations. The successful candidate will be actively involved with the reintroduction and monitoring, while conducting their own research.

The project has two main research questions, around which the successful candidate can investigate additional research questions. The main questions are:

- How does the source of founders (region, habitat similarity/differences) influence translocation outcomes (survival, habitat selection, site fidelity, reproductive success)?
- How does the composition of founding family groups (mating pairs with or without subordinates) influence translocation outcomes (survival, habitat selection, site fidelity, reproductive success)?

Depending on the successful candidate's field of interest, additional research questions might include (but are not limited to) investigating threats to Purple-crowned Fairy-wren, genetics, and impacts to source populations.

The project will be supervised by Professor Stephen Garnett, with additional co-supervisors identified depending on the successful candidate's field of interest.

About you:

- You have a research background (Honours or Masters) in ecology, conservation, or similar, and bring a high level of academic merit consistent with RTP stipend scholarship requirements
- Hold an Australian driving license
- Would be based or willing to relocate to Darwin
- Can work independently with a high level of initiative

Benefits to you:

- Contribute to research with real-world impact
- Gain exposure to a leading conservation organisation
- Access to Student Support Services and Wellbeing Support Program
- Access to a supportive, multidisciplinary research environment
- Work with a University committed to changing people's lives for the better through training, education, and research

Selection criteria:

- First Class Honours, MSc or equivalent containing a substantial research component in a relevant field. Previous experience working with birds and/or on reintroduction projects, and at least one first-author peer-reviewed publication, will be viewed favourably.
- Must meet CDU Higher Degree by Research entry requirements and the CDU Research Training Program (RTP) Scholarship requirements, including being either an Australian permanent resident or citizen, or a New Zealand citizen, with intention to be a domestic student

How to apply:

Email an expression of interest to Dr Ellen Rochelmeyer (ellenclaudia.rochelmeyer@cdu.edu.au), including:

- A curriculum vitae, including a list of any peer-reviewed publications, conference presentations and relevant work and/or research experience
- A brief statement, not exceeding 500 words, describing your background, research experience and interest in this research project/area
- Names and contact details of two academic referees

Application closing date: 11:59 pm Sunday 15th November 2026, with interviews scheduled for the week of the 16th November 2026

Commencement date: Early 2027

Enquiries: Dr Ellen Rochelmeyer (ellenclaudia.rochelmeyer@cdu.edu.au)

Diversity and Inclusion: At CDU, we actively celebrate our diversity. We innovate, embrace new ideas, and act with courage and kindness. We're about what we can give to the world rather than what we take, and we believe in the transformative power of education. We work hard to make sure every member of our university community feels that they truly belong. Understanding that it is through our focus on our people and leveraging our differences that will make CDU the most connected university in Australia, we are striving to ensure that our culture and our community are inclusive of all our staff, students and visitors. We are committed to maintaining a culture where everyone feels respected, safe, encouraged to speak up and supported in achieving their professional goals. You make CDU. And we want you to be exactly who you are.