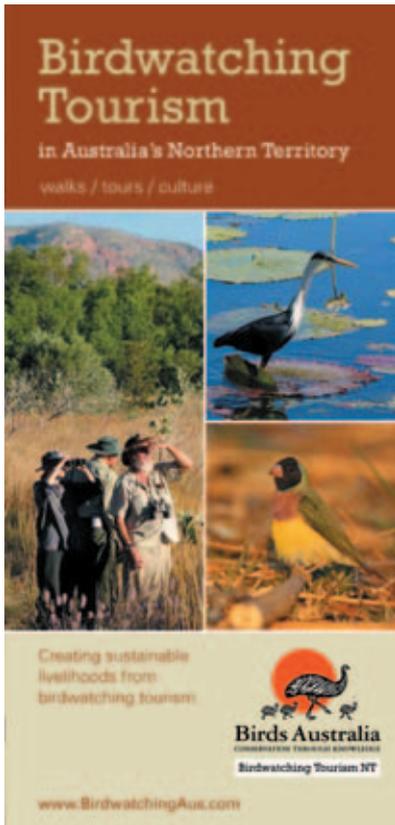


Birdwatching Tourism at Kakadu and the Top End



Birdwatching tourism brochure

Location	Darwin and Kakadu area, Northern Territory, Australia
Rio Tinto company	Energy Resources of Australia (ERA)
Partner organisations	Birds Australia, Tourism Northern Territory, Kakadu National Park, Parks Northern Australia
Key people	Guy Dutton, Steve Hughes and Toni Wythes (Birds Australia); Karin Lorenzon (Rio Tinto); David Paterson (ERA)
Habitats	Savanna, wetlands, sandstone plateau
Birds	Red Goshawk, Chestnut-quilled Rock-pigeon, White-throated Grasswren, White-lined Honeyeater
Outcomes	Training of birdwatching guides, especially from local indigenous communities; development of a Birding Route to support their employment

The region around Darwin in Australia was identified as a suitable region to replicate the success of South Africa's Birding Routes. A training course will be developed for birdwatching tour guides. Trainees, especially from local indigenous communities, will be recruited, trained and mentored. Targeted marketing will grow the number of birdwatching clients within Australia and, especially, from overseas. Building a pool of trained guides and providing job opportunities will help ensure sustainable livelihoods beyond closure of Energy Resources of Australia's Ranger mine.

Project background and history

As part of the Australian IBA Programme, Birds Australia and Rio Tinto identified the Darwin to Kakadu and Arnhem Land region as potentially suitable for replicating a birdwatching tourism model similar to South Africa's Zululand Birding Route. The IBA programme undertook a feasibility study in mid-2007, which revealed a high level of support and many opportunities for a similar project in Australia. A business plan was commissioned by Energy Resources of Australia in late 2007, an application to government for co-funding was successful, and the Northern Territory Birdwatching Tourism project started in April 2008.

Project details

The project aims to train local people as birdwatching guides, and to provide income for these guides by building the market of birdwatchers visiting the region. A training course is being developed with the local university to ensure that all guides are fully accredited by government. Mentorship will be offered to the new guides, especially those from Indigenous communities, which suffer from high levels of unemployment. Targeted marketing will promote the area's world-class birdwatching attributes, and provide a series of opportunities for visitors to contribute to local employment and conservation. Integrating conservation awareness throughout the training and guiding programme will increase awareness and, hopefully, management actions, for the region's declining birds. The development and implementation of this model for sustainable and socially relevant ecotourism continues to be facilitated by BirdLife through its global partnership with BirdLife Partners and with Rio Tinto.



Sunrise at Kakadu National Park