



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Paruku Rangers' night parrot discovery**

The Paruku Rangers have gathered photographic and audio evidence of what is believed to be the 'holy grail' of birds, the incredibly rare night parrot.

The ranger group, part of the Kimberley Ranger Network and facilitated by the Kimberley Land Council, had been conducting biodiversity surveys in the Great Sandy Desert when the photograph of the mysterious bird was taken.

The photographic evidence has now been backed up with an audio recording of a night parrot call recorded last month in the same area as where the bird was snapped earlier in the year.

The discovery is more than 1,500 km from the East Murchison region – the only other confirmed location for the species in WA, dramatically increasing the known range of the night parrot in Australia.

Considered by some as the world's most mysterious bird, for 100 years the night parrot was feared extinct until 2013 when it was rediscovered in western Queensland.

Paruku Ranger Lachlan Johns said that elders of the community had reported hearing the distinctive call of the mysterious bird while travelling and hunting, alerting the rangers to the possibility of its existence in the region.

Traditional Owner Hanson Pye said he was "very happy" to capture an image and now an audio recording of the bird after hearing stories of its existence from his grandfather.

"I remember my grandfather telling me that one day I'll see it, but this bird is very clever and only comes out at night," Mr Pye said. "It wobbles around when walking and comes out to eat the seed from the plants at night time."

Mr Pye said there are traditional songs and stories about the night parrot, but they are sacred and only known to a few people.

Paruku Ranger Coordinator Jamie Brown said he had heard about the bird through ecological conferences and ranger workshops, but also from talking to his grandmother and other elders.

“(My grandmother) knows this bird and remembers hearing them and seeing them as a child, so we know that the night parrot has existed in this area,” he said.

“Now that we have the evidence that the parrot is in the area, we need support for more rangers to manage fire in the region and the threat of feral predators like cats to keep this habitat safe.”

The Paruku Rangers’ discovery occurred during a routine survey for bilbies and the night parrot, supported by Dr Alexander Watson from WWF-Australia and Neil Hamaguchi from Environs Kimberley.

Dr Watson said the photographic and audio evidence has been confirmed by night parrot experts to “almost certainly” be the endangered bird.

“While the image may be a little blurry, the colours, shape, habitat and time the bird was photographed makes us extremely confident the rangers have photographed a night parrot,” he said.

“This discovery is yet another example of the importance of Indigenous rangers managing their country and Australia’s iconic threatened species.”

Ecologist Nigel Jackett of Birdlife Australia, who photographed night parrots earlier this year when they were rediscovered in central Western Australia, is also confident this sensor image is of a night parrot and said the audio recording closely matches known calls of night parrots from WA.

“Although blurred, the image shows a bird with a short neck and tail, with lime-green colouration to the head, neck, flanks and upper wing, combined with a contrasting yellow abdomen,” he said.

“These features match those from photographs of night parrots from the recently discovered population further south in Western Australia, as well as those from Queensland.

“The fact that the image was captured several hours after sunset, adjacent to suitable roosting and foraging habitat for this species, adds further weight to this significant record.”

Kimberley Land Council Chief Executive Officer Nolan Hunter said Indigenous knowledge and culture is paramount to protecting country and everything that lives within it.

“Indigenous knowledge could well be the saviour of Australia’s most endangered and revered wildlife,” Mr Hunter said. “Our rangers are working in the remotest corners of Australia and it is these areas which are proving to be the strongholds of iconic Australian flora and fauna.

“This discovery highlights the importance of the Working on Country and Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) programs that enable rangers to undertake this threatened species work.”

The exact location of the night parrot sighting will not be disclosed to ensure continued protection of the extremely endangered bird.

Anyone travelling in the area and surrounds is reminded that Paruku IPA has a visitor permit system for people wishing to visit or camp at Lake Gregory, Lake Stretch or Sturt Creek. For more information visit about this system please visit <http://www.parukuipa.org.au/>