

## NORTHERN SHRIKE-TIT COLONY DISCOVERED IN ARNHEM LAND

A colony of the rare Northern Shrike-tit (*Falcunculus f. whitei*) has been found deep in the heart of Arnhem Land.



Local rangers and a group of Northern Territory scientists were surprised to find the species when they recently surveyed the Laynhapuy Homelands.

It is the first time a colony of these Shrike-tits has been found in north-east Arnhem Land.

Dr. Simon Ward of the Northern Territory Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport (NRETAS) is quoted as saying: “..the Shrike-tits have a thinly spread population, and are not often seen, so we only have about thirty records for them, scattered across the Top End”.

There have been few sightings of the Northern Shrike-tit since it was first discovered at Borroloola, near the Gulf of Carpentaria in 1913. The most recent previous sighting being in the town of Katherine.

Dr. Ward said the sighting was significant as the bird was listed as “endangered” in both the Northern Territory and nationally.

Yumuutjin Wunungmurra, a traditional owner of the area said he had not seen the species before, but was pleased it had decide to call his country home. He stated that it was very important that the birds be given full protection.

Little survey work has been carried out in the area where the birds were found since a joint Australian-American scientific expedition to Arnhem Land in the late 1940s. It is intended to carry out more surveys of the region to determine the preferred habitat of the species, and to ascertain how widely spread it is. The Yirralka Rangers are to be trained in animal survey techniques and identification, so they can monitor the Shrike-tits efficiently and effectively in the future.

R.V.C.