



MEDIA RELEASE

Hedley Finlayson exhibition

The career of Hedley Finlayson, central Australia's most important mammal biologist, is the subject of a new exhibit at the Museum of Central Australia in Alice Springs.

Finlayson was a chemistry professor in Adelaide who coined the term "red centre" in recognition of central Australia's unique, special and fragile landscape and animals after exploring the area on a camel in the 1930s.

It was during the 1930s that Finlayson documented the many various desert mammals native to the area such as numbats, bandicoots, quolls, bilbys, burrowing bettongs and other strange creatures.

Many of these animals were threatened, endangered or extinct when Finlayson returned in the 1950s.

Strehlow Research Centre Director Dr Scott Mitchell said the Finlayson exhibition was an Australian first.

"We simply would not know what our desert mammals were like before the wave of extinctions took place had it not been for Finlayson's work," Dr Mitchell said.

"And what makes Finlayson's story more remarkable is he managed to do all this despite having lost an eye, his right hand and part of his left hand while experimenting with explosives as a young chemistry student.

"Finlayson twice conducted his work during height of summer over thousands of kilometres through the Australian desert and went on to campaign for the creation of national parks and legislation to protect endangered mammals.

"Despite the personal tragedies he experienced and the environmental tragedy he witnessed, his legacy remains for anyone who loves the Red Centre. He truly was a remarkable man."

Dr Mitchell said visitors to the museum would be able to view the many photos Finlayson took of his work as well as numerous taxidermic mounts.

The museum is open daily from 10am to 5pm.

Media Note _ For more information contact Dr Scott Mitchell on 8951 1101.

Ends

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