



MEDIA RELEASE

Golden Bandicoots assessed on remote Territory island

Researchers and Indigenous Rangers will travel to the uninhabited Martjanba Island to assess the only remaining population of Golden Bandicoots in the Territory.

Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts research scientist Carol Palmer said the population of these endangered Bandicoots was discovered in 1994, when researchers worked with traditional owners on the island off the north east Arnhem Land coast.

“Before European settlement, this small native marsupial was found across most of Australia,” Ms Palmer said.

“The species was last seen on the mainland in the early 1950s and by 1980 it was presumed extinct in the Territory.”

Ms Palmer said she and two other scientists, Rick Southgate and Pip Masters, travelled to the island in 1994 after confirmation of Golden Bandicoot hair in a dog scat from the island.

“During 1993 we conducted a general wildlife survey across the entire Wessel Island chain and it was during that time that we picked up the dog scat and identified the hair of the Golden Bandicoot,” Ms Palmer said.

“Next week we are going back to do a comprehensive survey of the Golden Bandicoots on Martjanba, accompanied by the Marthakal Sea Rangers (from Elcho Island) and Rangers from Kakadu National Park.

“On the island we will assess the population size and health of the last remaining Golden Bandicoots in the NT and check that no cats have been introduced on the island.

“The biggest threat to these animals is if a cat was accidentally released onto the island from the passing yachts and Indonesian fishing boats.”

The team will remain on the uninhabited island for a month to assess the population size.

Ms Palmer said if the population was a reasonable number there could be the potential to translocate some of the bandicoots next year to one or two other islands in the Wessel chain.

This would be as a precautionary tactic to establish one or two more populations on other islands and increase the chances of the Bandicoots’ survival.

“The Golden Bandicoot appears to be secure on Martjanba Island but could easily become extinct if cats were introduced to the island,” she said.

This project is collaboration between NRETA, Marthakal Sea Rangers Kakadu National park and funding from the Natural Heritage Trust.

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Media Note – For more information contact Carol Palmer on 8944 8477

Issued: 9am Thursday, 1 June 2006