



MEDIA RELEASE

International Seed Collector Arrives in Alice

An international co-ordinator of the Millennium Seed Bank project arrived in Alice Springs yesterday.

Michiel van Slageren travels between southern Africa, the Middle East and Australia, collecting seeds as part of the Millennium Seed bank Project that aims to collect 10 per cent of the world's seed-bearing flora by 2010 and safeguard 24,000 plants species from around the globe from extinction.

Mr van Slageren will work with an Alice Springs-based team of seed collectors from the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts (NRETA) who recently met their annual target of collecting seeds of 100 new species during their first year in the project.

NRETA seed biologist and NT seed bank curator Katherine Baker said the collection was a successful milestone.

"More than one million seeds have been collected throughout arid Australia this year that will be added to a global seed bank," Ms Baker said.

"We are on track to meet our quota of 550 species over six years.

"We are working as part of a larger international team of dry land countries including Jordan and the United States to collect 10,000 seeds for each species, some of which are threatened or unique to NT.

"During his time in Alice Springs Michiel will provide us with expert advice on seed collecting, processing and storage techniques."

Ms Baker said half of each seed lot collected would be sent to the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, in the United Kingdom for long term storage at the international seed bank.

"The project aims to encourage plant conservation throughout the world by facilitating access to and transfer of seed conservation technology," she said.

"The other half will remain in the NT for storage and research, so we can learn about desert plant germination requirements.

"The project will significantly increase the knowledge about the ecology of Territory plants as well as substantially develop the Territory's capacity to undertake seed collections, processing, banking and research programs."

Ms Baker said the project will be a great opportunity to promote public interest in plant conservation, with many people involved in the collection and cleaning process.

Collection will continue towards reaching the quota for March 2007 and the research phase will now commence on the species collected.

Ends

Media Note _ For more information contact Michiel van Slagran via Katherine Baker on 0429 133 794.

Issued: 11:30am Saturday, 10 June 2006