



MEDIA RELEASE

Ethnobiologist Searching for Rare Mangrove

Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts ethnobiologist Glenn Wightman has located new populations of a rare mangrove in the South Alligator River.

Mr Wightman said the *Finlaysonia obovata* is a mangrove found in Queensland and South-East Asia but had previously only been recorded at three different sites in the Northern Territory.

“A botanist who used to work for the Northern Territory Herbarium discovered the *Finlaysonia* in the late 1980s,” Mr Wightman said.

“During the trip to South Alligator we located three new populations of *Finlaysonia*, so that is a good result.”

“We now know that this plant exists in five locations in the South Alligator and one location in the East Alligator River.”

The *Finlaysonia* features in a new Mangrove Plant Identikit authored by Wightman and put together by Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Service and Greening Australia.

The identikit details the diversity of Top End Mangroves and describes the range of Aboriginal uses and knowledge associated with these plants.

Flowering in March and bearing fruit in November, the *Finlaysonia* is a woody climbing vine that has glossy and somewhat fleshy leaves.

He said they do not know why the mangrove appears to be rare.

“The seeds of the fruits have long white hairs, which should aid the plant to be widely distributed by the wind,” he said.

He said the new information about the *Finlaysonia* would also be added to a new version of the larger and more comprehensive book *Mangroves of the Northern Territory; identification and traditional use*.

“We are currently rewriting the book, first published in 1989, to include more traditional Aboriginal knowledge and vastly improved distributional information.

Mr Wightman said many people viewed mangroves as smelly, mosquito-infested, muddy, useless places, but that each plant played a part in the very important ecosystem and some had many uses.

“For example, the Grey Mangrove, *Avicennia marina*, is our most common mangrove and it has many uses,” Mr Wightman said.

“The fruit is eaten by turtles and by some Aboriginal groups after roasting in ashes.

“Mangrove worms are also usually found in the wood, but are considered ‘too cheeky’ to eat by most Aboriginal people, though they can be used as medicine, its leaves can also be used as medicine to treat various marine stings or as flavouring when cooked with mussels.”

The mangrove identikit retails for \$9.95 and is available from the Greening Australia office on 8981 1344 and Parks and Wildlife Service on 8999 4795, or by calling at the Greening Australia office at Dinah Beach, the Botanic Gardens in Stuart Park or the Goyder Centre in Palmerston.

The new improved version of Mangroves of the Northern Territory is expected to be completed later this year.

Ends

Media Note – For more information contact Glenn Wightman on 8999 4513

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