



## MEDIA RELEASE

### Island Haven for Last of Territory Golden Bandicoots

Researchers and rangers recently returned from the uninhabited island of Martjanba that was battered by the Category five Cyclone Monica to check on the last surviving population of Golden Bandicoots in the Territory.

Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts research scientist Carol Palmer said during the month long stay on Martjanba her team, including the Marthakal Sea Rangers from Elcho Island, Kakadu National Park Rangers and NLC “Caring for Country” staff conducted a comprehensive survey of the population of Golden Bandicoots.

“We were concerned about how these threatened animals survived after the Category five Cyclone Monica crossed Martjanba off the north-east Arnhem Land coast in April,” she said.

“It was a relief to find the population still there healthy and secure.”

Ms Palmer said the population of these endangered Bandicoots on the remote off-shore Island highlights the important role that NT islands play in conserving endangered species.

“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.

“From this survey we now have substantial data to determine the population of Golden Bandicoots living on the Island.

“We also confirmed that no cats had been introduced on the island.

“One of the biggest threats to the bandicoot populations would be if a cat was accidentally released onto the island from passing yachts or Indonesian fishing boats.

“During the survey we were delighted to discover the island is still cat free.”

Ms Palmer said the birds of Martjanba didn’t fare as well as the bandicoots.

“Nearly all the birds that were once recorded on the island have disappeared,” she said.

“They were probably blown out to sea or hopefully they knew to head to the mainland before the cyclone hit.

“It will be really interesting to watch over the coming years which birds return and in what order.”

Ms Palmer said now that her team had more information of the bandicoot population, the next step in the project could be 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' longterm 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, Northern Land Council, Kakadu National Park and funding from the Natural Heritage Trust.

Ends

**Media Note – For more information contact Carol Palmer on 8944 8447 or 0427270856**

**Photo available on request**

Issued: 8:30am Friday, 29 September 2006