



**Marion Scrymgour**  
MINISTER FOR ARTS AND MUSEUMS

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### **Invasive Gecko Species Found in Darwin Suburb**

Top End residents are being urged to keep a lookout for the “cane toad of the gecko world” – a breed of invasive gecko, which has been recently discovered in Darwin.

Environment Minister Marion Scrymgour said Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT) researchers are working to find out more about the Mourning Gecko (*Lepidodactylus lugubris*), an invasive foreign gecko recently discovered in Rapid Creek.

Ms Scrymgour said the NT is home to about 38 species of native geckos and two feral species that have been introduced.

“The Mourning Gecko is one of the most widespread geckos in the world and, in Australia, has previously been recorded from parts of north-east Queensland and from the Wessel Islands off north-east Arnhem Land,” she said.

“A local reptile researcher Lindley McKay, who recently authored a book on reptiles of Bali, first observed and collected the Mourning Gecko on the walls of his house at Rapid Creek in November 2005. Lindley brought his specimen into MAGNT for verification of the species identity, and has since collected another six specimens of the Mourning Gecko.”

Ms Scrymgour said it was disquieting to find the Mourning Gecko in a Darwin suburb, because another introduced gecko, the Asian House Gecko *Hemidactylus frenatus* has already successfully invaded Darwin.

“Historically, Darwin’s common house gecko was a native species but this has been mostly displaced by the Asian House Gecko which is thought to have been introduced during the early days of European settlement at Port Essington,” she said.

“It is now rare to find a native gecko on Darwin houses, and the nocturnal lizards whose appearance and vocalisations are so familiar to local householders are actually ‘Asian House Geckos’.

“Native geckos are still abundant in bushland surrounding Darwin, whilst the Asian invaders are relatively uncommon in natural habitats.”

Ms Scrymgour said one of the main concerns with finding the Mourning Gecko in Darwin is that most of its populations are unisexual.

“They have an unusual reproductive strategy which allows populations to consist only of females, as males are not necessary to fertilise and initiate egg production, and permits the Mourning Gecko to be a very successful invasive species.” she said. “I urge Top Enders to keep an eye out for this type of gecko and to notify our researchers if they believe they have seen one in their homes.”

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