



MEDIA RELEASE

Devil's Claw Festival

The NT Parks and Wildlife Service is calling for volunteers for this year's Devil's Claw Festival, a fun-packed bush adventure and an opportunity to help the environment.

Victoria River District chief district ranger Garry Fischer said the festival would be held at Gregory National Park, about 200km west of Katherine on Sunday 15 to Tuesday 24 April.

"The Festival is an annual volunteer environmental project dating back to the early 1990s aimed at eradicating the noxious devil's claw weed," Mr Fischer said.

"The weed is a bushy herb, native to Central and South America that grows to about two metres tall.

"The most effective and environmentally-safe way of eradicating it is through hand removal after initial aerial spraying more than 10 years ago reduced its numbers in the park."

Mr Fischer said volunteers along with Parks and Wildlife Service rangers and locally employed ranger groups have been essential in ensuring the success of this project during the past 12 years and helped to make last year's festival a tremendous success.

"We are hoping this year will be even better than previous years and have already had a good response from potential volunteers," Mr Fischer said.

"Last year the team only found 242 of the noxious weeds, a marked reduction in numbers since the year before.

"It was common to find around 20,000 devil's claw plants in Gregory National Park a bit over 10 years ago, but the number found in last year's effort demonstrates that if you continue to work hard you can certainly move closer to controlling this weed.

"But the spread of devil's claw depends quite heavily on the weather and the solid work of volunteers and that is why we are keen to build on the past efforts and ensure this year's festival goes ahead.

"Only when a weed is not found in a particular area for at least seven years is it deemed to be eradicated."

Trials undertaken on the park by Parks and Wildlife Service rangers are helping determine how long viable seeds may remain in the soil.

If you have some spare time and feel like an adventure, come to Gregory National Park and be part of this year's Festival. It's an opportunity to make a real difference, meet others who are interested in the environment and save our parks and native animals.

Volunteers should be physically fit and enjoy spending time in the bush. Food and transport around the Park will be provided by NT Parks and Wildlife Service. Be quick as places are limited.

Those wishing to volunteer should contact Simone Cordell on 8975 0833 or 8975 0888 to register.

Ends

Media Note _ For more information contact Garry Fischer on 8975 0936.

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