



MEDIA RELEASE

New Date Announced for Devil's Claw Festival

The NT Parks and Wildlife Service advise that this year's Devils Claw Festival to be held on 15 to 24 April will now take place on May 21 due to recent rains in the VRD.

Victoria River District Chief District Ranger, Garry Fischer, said that the festival was postponed early this month due to heavy rains that would have made it both dangerous and difficult to find the weed.

"Parks and Wildlife Service staff would like to advise volunteers that the new commencement date of the two week long festival has been confirmed as May 21," Mr Fischer said.

"We hope all those who have registered for this year's festival can still join us for the fun-packed bush adventure and opportunity to help the environment that the festival offers."

Mr Fischer said the festival is an annual volunteer environmental project dating back to the early 1990s aimed at eradicating the noxious devil's claw weed in Gregory National Park, about 200km west of Katherine.

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

"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.

"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.

"This years festival will now commence on May 21 for two weeks and we are hoping that when this year's festival gets underway it will be even better than previous years.

"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."

Mr Fischer said that if people have not yet registered and would like to volunteer for this year's festival there are still a few places available on the program.

“It’s an opportunity to make a real difference, meet others who are interested in the environment and save our parks and native animals,” Mr Fischer said.

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. Places are limited so be early.

Volunteers should contact Simone Cordell on 8975 0833.

Ends

Media Note _ For more information contact Garry Fischer on 89750936.

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