



MEDIA RELEASE

Rufous Owl Nesting Time

George Brown Darwin Botanic Gardens is about to put up three new nesting boxes for its resident pair of Rufous Owls (*Ninox rufa*) in time for the owls nesting season, which occurs from June to September.

Installation of the boxes is expected to take place this week, following several days of tree pruning to facilitate the nest boxes last week.

Curator Dave Griffiths said the Botanic Gardens' Rufous Owls, which are known as being elusive and unpredictable birds, attract birdwatchers from around the world.

Mr Griffiths said while there was some concern last year when two "Elephant's Ear" trees (*Enterolobium cyclocarpum*) that were being used by the Rufous Owls became a safety issue - one had to be heavily pruned and the other removed - the owls seem to be fine.

"On advice from a bird expert from the Territory Wildlife Park, we managed to preserve a hollow the owls were using from one of the trees and place it lower down in the tree," Mr Griffiths said.

The new nesting boxes will be in addition to the hollow currently being used by the birds.

"We figure the owls may see a more upmarket address and decide to move in, but their original habitat will remain," he said.

The three boxes will be placed in surrounding areas of the Gardens where the owls have been sighted.

"As nesting approaches, both birds roost close together, often on the same branch," Mr Griffiths said.

"After dark the male calls with a double hoot and the female may fly to him with excited bleating trills.

"Pairs perch side by side, while the male preens the nape of the female's neck, and the female picks at his toes with her bill."

The Rufous Owl gets its name from the rufous-colouring found on its forehead, brown, nape, back and upper wings and are commonly found in the Territory and Queensland as well as Papua New Guinea and the Aru Islands.

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Media Note – For more information contact Dave Griffiths on 0401 115 712

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