

Media Release:

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Top End Seeds Preserved in Global Plant Conservation Programme

The Northern Territory Government Millennium Seed Bank Project (MSBP) team have recently returned from a two week field trip to Limmen National Park, north-west of Borroloola.

The trip was an opportunity to collect seeds for the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and The Arts Seed Bank facility, a project based in Alice Springs that aims to ensure native Territory flora is protected for the future and also contribute to the international MSBP.

Seed Bank Curator Alice Quarmby and Seed Bank Technician Mrs Debbie Randall said that seed banking is an important conservation tool that preserves native species in the case of future environmental degradation and emerging issues such as Climate Change.

“The field expedition was a joint trip with staff from the Darwin Northern Territory Herbarium joining us to conduct botanical surveys of Limmen National Park,” Miss Quarmby said.

“The Millennium Seed Bank’s international supervisor Michiel Van Slageren, from Kew Botanic Gardens also made the trip from England to partake in the collection.

The Alice Springs based Parks and Wildlife Service Seed Scientists said they are hoping to collect 550 species by the end of 2010.

“The Herbarium team have a three year project focussed on surveying the park to gain a greater understanding of plant biodiversity values within the park, with respect to assessment of the conservation status of threatened species, mapping of representative vegetation land units within the park, and locating fire sensitive communities for Bushfires NT,” Dr Dale Dixon, Director of the Northern Territory Herbarium said.

Ms Quarmby said the joint trip was beneficial for both groups, with the Herbarium team and Seed Bank team able to assist each other with the identification of species as well as collecting plant records.

“I am extremely proud of our efforts, we were aiming to collect approximately 30 species, instead we collected around 50 species, almost half of our total yearly target, thanks to the assistance of the Herbarium Botanists who were able to provide us with identifications for most species and even helped collect seeds,” Miss Quarmby said.

Over 100 organisations from more than 50 countries are involved in the MSBP collecting and safely storing the seeds from ten percent of the world’s wild plant species.

“While the present partnership runs until 2010, it is important that this program continues beyond then as we need to ensure the continued safety of the Northern Territory Species,” Miss Quarmby said.

The Seed Bank supports better park planning and management which feeds into conservation planning for all of the Northern Territory.

For more information visit www.kew.org/msbp/index/htm

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Media Note – for more information contact Alice Quarmby on 8951 8282.

Image Credit – 1. Alice Quarmby Collecting Melaleuca

2. Debbie Randall Collecting Asteromyrtus Symphyocarpas Seeds

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