

Media Release:

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## Supercroc Skull Arrives at MAGNT

The two-metre long replica skull of an extinct supercroc, which would have been 12 metres in length and weigh up to eight tons when alive, has arrived at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT) among a large shipment of crocodylian artefacts.

MAGNT Curator of Terrestrial Vertebrates, Dr Paul Horner, said the immense supercroc skull will be on display to greet visitors at the entrance of the *Supercrocodylians: Darwin's ultimate survival story* exhibition scheduled for 2009 as part of next year's Darwin 200 celebrations.

"The supercroc, *Sarcosuchus imperator*, is the biggest crocodylian known to have ever existed and this replica skull will no doubt prove to be a popular feature of the exhibition," Dr Horner said.

"Many of the replica crocodylian skulls that have arrived for the *Supercrocodylians: Darwin's ultimate survival story* exhibition represent creatures that are highly endangered and live in remote parts of the world."

Dr Horner said the exhibition is essentially a demonstration of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution using crocodyles.

"*Supercrocodylians: Darwin's ultimate survival story* will show the diversity and relationships of crocodylians through time using skulls, skeletal material, casts, models and graphics as well as using a phylogenetic 'time-line' tree to link all these stories, specimens and graphics together," Dr Horner said.

"Visitors will also have the chance to handle interactive material specifically developed separately from the exhibit in MAGNT's Discovery Centre."

Dr Horner said the exhibition emphasises Australian crocodylian fossil species, particularly from the Northern Territory, such as *Baru*, *Pallimnarchus*, *Quinkana*, *Harpocochampsa*, *Isisfordia* and *Australosuchus*.

"Australia's fossil records only span about the last 100 million years of crocodylian evolutionary history, and the recently discovered Queensland *Isisfordia*, who lived approximately 95 million years ago, is the earliest known representative of all 'modern' crocodyles," Dr Horner said.

"Representatives of the oldest and intermediate-aged extinct crocodylians that were not found in Australia will be showcased, as well as crocodile-like animals that are now extinct, such as the labyrinthodont amphibians – an extinct order of amphibians that have a labyrinthine pattern in their teeth, and phytosaurs, large extinct reptiles that looked very much like modern crocodyles.

"In addition to the extinct species *Supercrocodylians: Darwin's ultimate survival story* will also display the diversity of living species through skulls, skeletons and casts of species such as *Crocodylus porosus* (estuarine crocodile), *Crocodylus johnstoni* (freshwater crocodile), *Alligator mississippiensis* (American alligator), *Osteolaemus tetraspis* (African dwarf crocodile), *Gavialis gangeticus* (gavial; the long-snouted fish-eating crocodylian from India), *Tomistoma schlegellii* (false gavial) and caimans such as the *Melanosuchus niger* (black caiman; caimans are South American crocodylians).

"The Top End is well-renowned for our crocodyles and this exhibition will highlight the amazing evolution of the group through the visual and interactive display."

The Darwin 200 celebrations are to coincide with 2009 being Charles Darwin's 200<sup>th</sup> birthday and the *Supercrocilians: Darwin's ultimate survival story* exhibition will be held from 12 February until 24 November 2009.

MAGNT is open Monday to Friday from 8am to 4.30pm, closed weekends and public holidays. For more information go to [www.nt.gov.au/magnt](http://www.nt.gov.au/magnt)

Ends

**Media Note – for more information contact Exhibitions Coordinator Wendy Wood on 8999 8145**

**Images -**

- 1. MAGNT's Dirk Megirian making a crocodile cast**
- 2. Supercroc kept under wraps**

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