

Media Release:

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Helping Industry Meet Biodiversity Goals

Scientists from the Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport (NRETAS) are working together with local Indigenous rangers and the local mining industry to save the vulnerable northern hopping-mouse (*Notomys aquilo*).

The northern hopping-mouse is the only species of hopping-mouse in the Top End and lives almost exclusively in sandy woodland and vegetated dune areas of Groote Eylandt, in the Gulf of Carpentaria, 650km east of Darwin.

NRETAS threatened species researcher Dr Simon Ward said following collaborative research with Anindilyakwa Rangers a specific monitoring program for the northern hopping-mouse has been developed and is now being used by local manganese mining company Groote Eylandt Mining Company (GEMCO).

“GEMCO are using the information and surveying methods we developed to minimise their impacts on this threatened species as part of their obligations under the *Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

“With GEMCO carrying out pre-mining surveys of the northern hopping-mouse, and NRETAS ongoing monitoring programs, we can help ensure the continued survival of the threatened species alongside mining operations and development on the island.”

The collaboration between NRETAS and Anindilyakwa rangers commenced in 2006 and is aimed at improving knowledge of the species’ status, and developing management and monitoring programs.

“The northern hopping-mouse can be difficult to find as they generally don’t enter traps, they dig complex burrow systems with only obscure signs left on the surface,” Dr Ward said.

“We recently discovered one of the burrow systems and after confirming the presence of the northern hopping-mouse we were able to set up a series of permanent monitoring site markers, which will allow us to count a number of burrow systems in future surveys.

“The joint work between NRETAS and Anindilyakwa Rangers is also providing new information on the biology and ecology of the species, as well as providing the local community on Groote Eylandt with a better understanding of their lands and natural heritage.”

Biodiversity Month is held in September each year and aims to promote the importance of protecting, conserving and improving biodiversity both within Australia and across the world, to help ensure our important environments and habitats are preserved for future generations to appreciate and enjoy.

Ends

Media Note – for more information contact Simon Ward on 8995 5013

Image – A northern hopping-mouse from Groote Eylandt

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