

Media Release:

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Pictures Worth a Thousand Words

Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport (NRETAS) researchers are proving the old saying 'a picture is worth a thousand words' true by using field surveillance cameras to study remote desert wetlands.

NRETAS scientist Dr Jayne Brim Box said the surveillance cameras allow a better understanding of how desert waterholes are important to wildlife in a broader landscape context.

"These cameras are proving to be an excellent tool for gauging what animals use arid wetlands and when - the cameras take photos when motion is detected, use an infrared flash and sensor at night, and can store thousands of photos in one deployment," Dr Brim Box said.

"So far a wide range of birds, native mammals and feral animals have been recorded and in one night alone over 11,000 pictures were taken of feral camels drinking from a remote waterhole.

Dr Brim Box said NRETAS scientists have been researching remote desert wetlands in collaboration with local Traditional Owners over the past three years, and the recently acquired field cameras add a new dimension to the project by fusing new technologies with traditional knowledge.

"Traditional Owners have always recognised the value of desert wetlands for both people and animals, and because only limited western science has been conducted, especially in central Australia, the input of Traditional Owners is crucial to the project," Dr Brim Box said.

"Traditional Owners help us decide when and where to place the cameras as they are familiar with what animals might be in the area, and they also have historical and ecological information of the sites.

"The Traditional Owners are also eager to learn about the camera technology, and there's always an element of excitement when we download the pictures because everyone is keen to see what the cameras have captured."

Veronica Dobson, a Traditional Owner of permanent springs near Santa Teresa, said the springs were very significant places for her people and other families who have always lived in the area.

"Many animals are still at the springs, but there are others that haven't been there for a long time in and around these sites like emus, bustards, spinifex pigeons and princess parrots," Ms Dobson said.

"We Traditional Owners don't want any big changes, just keeping watch with what changes are happening, like we have been doing since we started monitoring these two springs."

The cameras have been trialled at Owen Springs Reserve, Anna's Reservoir Conservation Reserve and on the Ahakeye, Petermann and Santa Teresa Aboriginal Land Trusts, with plans to expand the use of the cameras to detect wildlife activities across the Parks and Wildlife reserve system.

This project is a collaborative effort between NRETAS, the Central Land Council, Tangentyere's Land and Learning Program, Greening Australia and the local Traditional Owners.

Ends

Media Note – for more information contact Dr Jayne Brim Box on 8951 8224

Images – 1. Cameras being installed

2. Images from cameras include; dingo, pied butcher bird and euro

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