

**Media Release:**

**12.12.08**

## **Survey on Endangered Slater's Skink**

Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport (NRETAS) and the Tjuwanpa Indigenous Ranger group at Hermannsburg, Central Australia commenced a census of the abundance of the endangered Slater's skink along the Finke River, west of Hermannsburg earlier this week on Tuesday, 9 December 2008.

NRETAS' senior scientist Chris Pavey said the survey was part of the ongoing project aimed at protecting the endangered Slater's skink.

"Abundance surveys are carried out throughout the various sites throughout Central Australia where the Slater's skink is found," Dr Pavey said.

"We peg out an area of 100 m x 100 m (one hectare) and search within the area for signs of the skink, especially animals resting at or near the entrance to their burrow.

Also known as a Floodplain skink, the Slater's skink is a brown medium sized lizard with a short snout and large head.

NRETAS' senior scientist Chris Pavey said the project at Hermannsburg commenced in late 2006 when surveys undertaken with the Tjuwanpa rangers revealed a new population along the Finke River.

"In addition to the surveys considerable work is being undertaken to control buffel grass, an introduced pasture grass that causes degradation of the skink's habitat, and is considered the biggest threat to the lizard."

Dr Pavey said the Slater's skink was thought to be extinct until surveys by Biodiversity Conservation and the Alice Springs Desert Park (ASDP) in May 2004 located the species at four sites in the Alice Springs region.

"The management program is now in its fourth year and work to date emphasises that suitable habitat for the species remains limited with the total population estimated to be as little as 200 animals," Dr Pavey said.

"We believe that the population along the Finke River is the largest and, therefore, of greatest importance in conserving the species, which is why we are focussing efforts on finding out how many animals are present."

The skills and tenacity of the Tjuwanpa Rangers provides a unique opportunity to understand more about this endangered species.

"The rangers are adept at finding these animals," Dr Pavey said.

"Yesterday, they located the first animal within one minute of leaving the vehicle after the drive from Hermannsburg."

Key partners working with the Northern Territory Government in the recovery of the Slater's skink include the Central Land Council, Charles Darwin University and the South Australian Museum, with funding for the project with the Tjuwanpa Rangers provided by the Natural Resource Management Board (NT).

The Tjuwanpa Ranger program is supported by Tjuwanpa Outstation Resource Centre and coordinated by the Central Land Council with general funding support through the Department of Environment Water Heritage & the Arts Working On Country Program and CDEP.

Ends

**Media Note –For more information contact Chris Pavey on 8951 8249.**

**Images:**

- 1. A Slater's skink pokes its head out of a burrow**
- 2. Tjuwanpa Rangers & Dr Chris Pavey observing skinks**

Issued: 12.30pm Friday, 12 December 2008