

Media Release:

11.02.09

Exploring Desert Evolution for Charles Darwin Day

The Alice Springs Desert Park (ASDP) and Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Service are joining in the worldwide celebrations of Charles Darwin's 200th birthday with a line-up of themed presentations in Alice Springs on Wednesday 11 February and Thursday 12 February 2009.

Charles Darwin, the famous naturalist who wrote *On the Origin of Species* was born on 12 February 1809 and celebrations are planned throughout 2009 to commemorate his ideas about evolution and his understanding of the natural world.

In the lead up to tomorrow's anniversary of Charles Darwin's birth Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Service senior interpretation ranger Mark Carter will be holding a public talk at the Olive Pink Botanic Gardens hosted by the Alice Springs Field Naturalist Club at 7.30pm Wednesday 11 February 2009.

"The talk is adapted from the book 'Your Inner Fish' by Neil Shubin and will discuss the amazing evidence of evolution in fossils, in our wildlife and even inside our own bodies," Mr Carter said.

"Living evidence of evolution surrounds us here in the desert, the plants and animals flourish in some of the most extreme conditions that exist on Earth and flora and fauna that aren't "at the top of their game" are eliminated before they reproduce, meaning only the best adapted species survive to pass on their genes.

"Charles Darwin's theory of 'evolution by natural selection' has come to form the basis of modern life sciences and continues to influence disciplines all the way from modern medicine through to the conservation of endangered species."

ASDP Guide Manager Regena Medhurst said the Alice Springs Desert Park is celebrating Charles Darwin's Birthday with special guide presentations and encourages everyone to come along tomorrow, 12 February 2009 to discover some unique and interesting facts about evolution of the desert's landscape, animals and people.

"The Riddle of the Timeless Range' commences at 9am and will look at how the land has changed and evolved over time covering the millions of years of geological change in the Alice Springs region," Ms Medhurst said.

"From 11am one of the Park's indigenous guides will discuss 'Aboriginal Survival in the Desert' which will no doubt give visitors a further appreciation of how Aboriginal people lived and survived in Central Australia for thousands of years.

"The relationship between birds to ensure the continuation of the species will be explored in the 2pm presentation 'The Mile High Club' – whether it be communal living or pairing for life, different birds' species have evolved different strategies for continued survival.

"The final presentation 'Threatened Species' commences at 4pm and looks at how the Alice Springs Desert Park is ensuring the continuation of locally extinct species through breeding programs and will feature a walk through the Nocturnal House to see some of the many threatened species that are displayed at the Park."

Ends

Media Note – for more information contact Mark Carter on 8951 8208 or Regena Medhurst on 8951 8727

Issued: 9am Wednesday, 11 February 2009

Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport

Karlie Goetze Ph. 8999 4726

www.nt.gov.au/nreta