

Media Release:

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Endangered Species Finds New Home at the Desert Park

The Alice Springs Desert Park has welcomed its first family group of the endangered Australian mammal species Greater Stick-nest Rat to their free range enclosure the Mulga Walk.

Greater Stick-nest Rats became extinct on the mainland of Australia in the 1930s however small populations occurred on East and West Franklin Island off the coast of South Australia.

Alice Springs Desert Park Specialist Keeper Mammals Clare Ciechanowicz said that Greater Stick-nest Rats have been successfully relocated to large predator proof enclosures in South Australia including Reevesby Island and the Arid Recovery Centre.

“The Desert Park were extremely fortunate to collect three adult pairs from the population at the Arid Recovery Centre and one pair of these have been released into our Mulga Walk,” Ms Ciechanowicz said.

“Since this pair were collected in August 2009 they have successfully bred three times here at the Desert Park, producing one young on two occasions and a set of twins on the third occasion.

“The adult female is now pregnant with her next litter and is due any day now, so it’s been a great achievement to release the animals into the Mulga Walk.”

Ms Ciechanowicz said there were two species of Stick-nest Rats; the Greater Stick-nest Rat (*Leporillus conditor*) which reach weights up to 450g and the Lesser Stick-nest Rat (*Leporillus apicalis*) which only reached weights up to 150g.

“The Lesser Stick-nest Rats are now extinct; they were last seen alive in 1933 and while both species used to be found across the southern half of mainland Australia we understand only the Lesser Stick-nest Rats used to occur in the Northern Territory,” Ms Ciechanowicz said.

“The family of Greater Stick-nest Rats will join other local species including the Bilby, Mala, Echidna, Bandicoot and Bush-stone Curlew in the Mulga Walk, and visitors may catch a glimpse of them foraging on foliage and fruits of saltbush around their nest site on our Nocturnal Tours.

“Once the new young are born the female may be spotted chewing down pieces of acacia browse and adding them to the nest while dragging her new offspring along behind her.

“We encourage locals and visitors to come to the Desert Park and check out the new arrivals, and learn more about many other rare and threatened Central Australian mammal species.”

The Desert Park’s Nocturnal Tour, including a spotlight tour through the Mulga Walk, runs daily Monday through to Friday. Bookings are essential: phone 8951 8788.

Ends

Media Note – for more information / interviews contact Clare Ciechanowicz on 8951 8721

Image – Greater Stick-nest Rat at the Alice Springs Desert Park

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