

MEDIA RELEASE

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MAKE A DIFFERENCE ON A ‘VOLUNTOUR’ SCIENCE SAFARI!

The WA Department of Parks and Wildlife and award-winning tour operator Global Gypsies are offering another exciting, guided and catered “*Voluntour*” *Science Safari* in April 2015.

On these inter-active, hands-on adventures, environmentally conscious holiday-makers have the opportunity to assist scientists with such important research projects as bird and threatened mammal capture, tagging, release and monitoring. Not only is the experience personally rewarding for participants, the work also provides Parks and Wildlife with valuable information about the distribution, abundance, condition and breeding status of the target species. In addition, partial proceeds are donated to *Operation Rangelands Restoration* to help fund future flora and fauna research projects in WA.

The next joint *Science Safari* will take place from April 28 – May 7. A base camp will be established at the Lorna Glen ex-pastoral lease (Matuwa) homestead in central WA, about 165 kms north-east of Wiluna. This area has determined Native Title and is managed jointly with the Wiluna Martu community.

The tour will be run ‘tag-along style’ with 4WD vehicles travelling in a small convoy led by Jeremy Perks, a former Tour Guide of the Year. The escort vehicle will be equipped with 4WD recovery gear, GPS, satellite phone and first-aid kit. Participants will need to have robust 4WD vehicles and UHF radios. Two passenger seats in the escort vehicle will also be available. Accommodation will be camping with camper-trailers, off-road caravans and/or tents welcome. Quality catering will be provided by experienced Safari Hostess Jo Clews.

Parks and Wildlife scientific staff participating in the ‘voluntour’ will be Keith Morris, Senior Principal Research Scientist and Manager of the Animal Science Program; Colleen Sims, Research Scientist, and responsible for fauna translocations at Lorna Glen, and several other researchers. Tasks they will be assigning to tour participants will include:

- Monitoring numbers of threatened golden bandicoots, mala (rufous hare wallaby) and boodies within the fenced enclosure through a trapping and release census and spotlighting. These activities are undertaken twice a year and provide information on the status of these threatened mammals.
- Monitoring numbers of mulgara, both within the fenced enclosure and outside the enclosure, using trapping grids. This provides information on the impact of feral cats on this species.
- Monitoring brushtail possum and bilby distribution using remote cameras and scat collection along transects.
- Searching for golden bandicoots outside the enclosure using track searches and remote cameras.
- Undertaking bird netting and banding as part of the bird monitoring program.
- Assisting to clean cages, homestead and other areas.

There will also be time to relax and enjoy the area, go bushwalking, go on 4WD excursions, take photographs, sketch or paint.

Matuwa (Lorna Glen) is the site of an ambitious adaptive management project with the Wiluna Martu people to restore the property's rangeland ecosystems. A major part of this project is the reintroduction of 11 species of native mammals which previously occurred in the area, but are now locally extinct.

If these reintroductions are successful they will reduce the risk of extinction for some of the species. As many of the animals that are being re-introduced to Matuwa are diggers and burrowers, they also help restore habitats through improved water penetration of the soil, nutrient recycling, seed dispersal and creation of favourable habitats for seed germination.

Says Keith Morris, "Researchers and managers from Parks and Wildlife and the Wiluna Martu people have been undertaking and monitoring mammal translocations at Matuwa for several years. The Science Safaris have made a valuable contribution to this research and monitoring work and our joint venture with Global Gypsies is a very successful ongoing initiative between government and private enterprise."

Cost of the ten-day safari is \$2497 per person for tag-along clients including catering, camping fees, scientific activities, research donation and GST. Cost for passengers travelling in the escort vehicle is \$2750 per person which also includes transport and camping gear.

For further information please contact Global Gypsies on 9341-6727; email admin@globalgypsies.com.au; website: www.globalgypsies.com.au