

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Tickets available to step onto a real fossil dig

Ever wanted to step onto a real fossil dig? This International Museum Day, the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT) invite the public to do just that, with tickets now available for Discovery Day at Alcoota Scientific Reserve.

This special event will offer visitors the chance to meet MAGNT palaeontologists and gain exclusive access to the Alcoota Scientific Reserve, located northeast of Alice Springs, to experience palaeontology in action.

MAGNT researchers have been uncovering Australia's past at the Alcoota megafauna fossil site for more than 30 years, gaining extraordinary insights into Australia's ancient past. Their discoveries help tell the story of a continent undergoing dramatic environmental change, as lush ecosystems gave way to the arid landscapes we know today.

As part of his talk in celebration of International Museum Day at Megafauna Central on Sunday, Senior Curator of Earth Sciences Dr Adam Yates announced the rare opportunity to visit the most extensive fossil deposit of its age in Australia.

This full day tour on Sunday, 2 August with MAGNT palaeontologists will give visitors rare exclusive access to the famous Alcoota megafauna fossil site, normally closed to the public.

"The Alcoota fossil beds date back approximately 6–8 million years to the Late Miocene, a time often referred to as the "age of mammals," Dr Yates said.

"We look forward to welcoming members of the community to stand within Australia's largest terrestrial vertebrate bone bed and watch a real fossil dig in progress."

The Alcoota site contains the remains of thousands of megafauna individuals, preserved in a dense and complex deposit that may represent an ancient waterhole.

Visitors to Discovery Day will get up close to these ancient giants, including the awe-inspiring *Dromornis stirtoni*, also known as the "Thunderbird"—one of the largest birds to have ever lived. Despite their size and flightlessness, these birds were herbivores more closely related to ducks and geese than to emus or cassowaries.

"From uncovering a crocodile osteoderm to revealing the jaw of a giant browsing marsupial, every moment at Alcoota holds the potential for discovery," Dr Yates said.

"Excavating fossils at Alcoota is no simple task. The bones are embedded in dense, clay-rich sediments and are often highly fractured due to millions of years of environmental change. Each fossil must be carefully stabilised and removed with precision."

Join us for this unforgettable discovery day and be part of uncovering Australia's ancient story.

The Alcoota Discovery Day will be held on Sunday, 2 August from 8am to 5pm.

Spots are limited and bookings are essential. To secure your place visit:

<https://www.magnt.net.au/alicesprings>

International Museum Day will be celebrated worldwide on 18 May under the theme "Museums Uniting a Divided World".

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