



MEDIA RELEASE

2022 Alcoota Field Season Commences

12 July 2022

The Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory's researchers dig into the past as they embark on the 2022 Alcoota Fossil Reserve Field Season near Alice Springs.

Alcoota is a significant palaeontological site where well-preserved, rare megafauna fossils provide evidence of the evolution of the Northern Territory's animals and climate. It tells stories of how our land came to be and what our country looked about 8 million years ago as it dried out

This Dig is a proud legacy spanning three decades, led by MAGNT's palaeontological and geological curators, and is a cornerstone of MAGNT's Earth Science program.

The MAGNT Earth Science Team aim to excavate high-quality specimens from the two pits that yielded the best material during the last field season in 2019 and to understand the nature of the bone bed that they sample. This year's data collection will help test three different hypotheses on how the bone accumulation formed.

Dr Kirsti Abbott, MAGNT Head of Science said:

"The Alcoota Fossil deposit is unique in many ways and is the oldest mammalian fauna on the continent dominated by megafauna. It is also the only rich deposit of land animals from the Late Miocene of Australia (10.4 – 5 million years ago). We are lucky to have access to the largest single bone bed of terrestrial vertebrate animals in Australia. The Team and I are excited to visit these fossil beds to continue to fill in the gaps about how these animals died."

During the Dig, MAGNT's curators, technicians and volunteers will host palaeontology students as part of 34 year-long partnership with Flinders University.

Professor Gavin Prideaux from Flinders University said:

"Palaeontology is a very hands-on discipline, but opportunities for students to get into the field to work alongside researchers are rare. This trip is a really special one, representing not only the first time to the NT for many Flinders palaeo students, but the first time many have been on a palaeo field trip. It's an unmatched opportunity to learn how to discover the bones of amazing, ancient creatures."

Long-term volunteer citizen scientists will also participate throughout the duration of the Dig.

MAGNT will also facilitate an Engawala Community Day for Custodians and community members. Community members will join the Earth Science Team to discover the work that is carried out at the site.

2022 Alcoota Scientific Reserve Dig runs from Tuesday 12 July to Friday 5 August.

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Discovery Day

The public are invited to join the MAGNT researchers on a rare experience at the paleontological site while a dig is underway. There will be hands on activities for kids and an opportunity to view the surrounding landscape from a stunning highpoint on the site. [Purchase your ticket here.](#)

Available to interview:

Dr Kirsti Abbott, Head of Science

Dr Adam Yates, Senior Curator of Earth Sciences



Media Contact

Please contact Rebecca Campart on 0457 495 149 or rebecca.campart@magnt.net.au to arrange an interview.

About MAGNT

The Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT) is the Northern Territory's premier cultural organisation and home to internationally renowned artistic, cultural and scientific collections, and research programs. MAGNT also operates the historic Fannie Bay Gaol in Darwin, the Museum of Central Australia incorporating the Strehlow Research Centre in Alice Springs, Megafauna Central and the Alcoota Fossil Bed site north east of Alice Springs.

About Megafauna Central

Megafauna Central presents the story of megafauna in central Australia through displays of the fascinating fossils found at the Alcoota Scientific Reserve. The Museum includes displays of fossil material, and life-size replicas of the giant flightless bird *Dromornis stirtoni*, and *Baru* the fresh water crocodile that inhabited central Australia eight million years ago. Interpretation is provided in both English and Arrernte languages. The facility also provides collection storage and research facilities for fossils found at the Alcoota Scientific Reserve.

About Alcoota Fossil Reserve

Located 190 kilometres northeast of Alice Springs, the Alcoota Scientific Reserve is a dense fossil site featuring one of the largest concentrations of terrestrial vertebrates from the late Miocene Epoch in Australia. The reserve preserves the abundant bones of 30 species of animal, including many megafauna that were living in the heart of Australia about eight million years ago. The Alcoota Scientific Reserve has been part of an ongoing MAGNT research program since 1986.