

Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre University of Canberra

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

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Feral Professor wins Oscar of Australian Science

Professor Tony Peacock received one of Australia's top science awards, the prestigious Australian Museum Eureka prize, last night in Sydney.

Chief Executive Officer for the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre based at the University of Canberra, Professor Peacock took out the gong for the highly contested category of 'Promoting Understanding of Science'.

The award recognises his efforts to investigate and communicate the devastating effect feral animals have on Australia's environment.

"It's nice to have recognition of the importance of making sure the community hears about feral animals and the interesting activities we are doing to hinder their impacts," said Professor Peacock.

A report released last year by the Invasive Animals CRC reveals the economic impact of rabbits, wild dogs, mice, foxes and feral pigs and pest birds is estimated at over \$740 million per year.

"The figure is just the tip of the iceberg. It doesn't consider the environmental nor social costs of invasive animals. We haven't attempted to estimate the costs on our fragile biodiversity by putting a dollar figure on our precious native species that are killed by animals like foxes or cats," he said.

Passionate about the need to minimise the impact of pest animals on Australia's biodiversity, he devotes great time and energy, professionally and personally, to raising public awareness of this issue.

"Professor Peacock is a born communicator. He has a warm, informative and engaging style which makes him a sought-after media performer who is popular with audiences, particularly on radio," said Frank Howarth, Director of the Australian Museum.

To get his message across, Professor Peacock utilises media appearances, an online blog called Feral Thoughts (www.feral.typepad.com) and social media networks such as Twitter. He is also a regular on the speakers' circuit, where he addresses community and business groups.

One of Professor Peacock's priorities is striving to stop the next wave of invasive animals from entering Australia. He has influenced policy-making regarding the importation of potentially harmful species, and has campaigned strongly against the introduction of hybrid pets — animals with a mix of wild and domestic genes. His repeated warnings of the likely devastating impact of Savannah Cats on Australia's environment convinced the Federal Government to ban their importation in 2008.

MORE INFORMATION:

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