



June 10, 2009

## **Bush Heritage Australia embark on project to save world's last population of fish species**

ONE of the world's rarest fish has been thrown a lifeline with new trials to save the species from an introduced competitor – the gambusia.

The world's last four populations of the redfin blue-eye – Australia's smallest freshwater fish – can be found only in the freshwater springs on Edgbaston Reserve, a central Queensland Reserve owned by Bush Heritage Australia. The increasing dominance of the gambusia, which feeds on small fish and fish eggs, is threatening its survival.

The efforts of Bush Heritage ecologists on Edgbaston Reserve have been made possible from a grant from the South Australian Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board (SAAL NRM Board) to implement and trial new methods of removing populations of the gambusia.

Bush Heritage Australia CEO Doug Humann said the gambusia had infested many of the freshwater springs at Edgbaston, almost certainly to the detriment of two critically endangered native fish species, the redfin blue-eye and the Edgbaston goby.

'These two native species are an integral part of the area's exceptional biodiversity values.

'Currently the redfin blue-eye is only found in four springs and Edgbaston goby in nine and the range of both species appears to have contracted over the past 20 years,' he said.

'In contrast the range of the gambusia has expanded to at least 21 springs on the property.'

He said Bush Heritage Australia ecologists are trialling a number of methods to rid the springs of the gambusia, including tirelessly netting out the gambusia, which after initial trials is proving to be successful in reducing the population from a number of springs.

'They are also placing barrier fences around some populations of the gambusia and the native species to prevent migration during small flood events.'

The SAAL NRM Board's Water Project Officer, **Henry Mancini** said they were pleased to support the efforts of Bush Heritage Australia to save the redfin blue-eye.

'Gambusia represents a real threat to the native fish species in South Australia's arid land springs so we wanted to invest in measures to control this fish in the upper catchment areas in Queensland.'

<ENDS>

## NOTES TO MEDIA

Interview opportunity with Bush Heritage Australia CEO, Doug Humann

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High resolution photos are available of the redfin blue-eye and Edgbaston goby.

## NOTES TO EDITORS

### **About Bush Heritage Australia**

Bush Heritage Australia, which was founded in 1990, is a not-for-profit organisation that protects Australia's unique animals and plants and their habitats. It owns and manages 31 reserves throughout Australia covering almost 1 million hectares. Bush Heritage Australia's goal is to protect more than 7 million hectares by 2025 through ownership, management and partnership.

### **About Edgbaston Reserve**

Edgbaston Reserve is located in Central Queensland, 140 km north-east of Longreach, Edgbaston is a pastoral lease of 8100 hectares.

It is the traditional country of the Iningai people. The property's grasslands, woodlands and wetlands also provide habitat for a range of migratory and other birds.

Situated in the upper catchment of the Pelican Creek which flows into the Thompson River and Lake Eyre, Edgbaston's network of more than 50 artesian springs is home to an extraordinary diversity of life forms found nowhere else on the planet.

Additionally, the springs are the only known home of a number of other species of fish, snails, plants, and a crustacean. Edgbaston is a property which emphasises the spectacular evolutionary niches that have been created in Australia.