

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

Professor Chris Johnson

A multi-institutional team led by Prof Johnson last night won the Eureka Prize for their investigation of the native dog's role in reducing damage caused by kangaroos, foxes and feral cats.

They have found that dingoes sustain biodiversity and control the numbers of kangaroos, foxes and feral cats.

“Australia has a big problem with biodiversity loss,” Prof Johnson said today. “We’ve already lost many native species and many more are in decline, possibly on the way to extinction.

“To turn this situation around, we need bold new approaches, such as using the dingo to help control threatening species like foxes and cats.”

The team—which also includes Dr Michael Letnic of the University of New South Wales, Dr Euan Ritchie of Deakin University, Dr Arian Wallach of James Cook University and Adam O'Neill at Evelyn Downs Station, 850km north of Adelaide —found that dingoes now occupy the top predator role once filled by the Tasmanian tiger.

Prof Johnson is a New Star Professor in the UTAS School of Zoology. His other current research projects include an investigation of the decline of small mammals in the tropical savannahs of northern Australia and another into why Australia's Pleistocene megafauna became extinct.

A short video made by Prof Johnson about his team's dingo research can be viewed here:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i4jNyQ9xPmU&list=PLEh1S0YpN664wbOOk_HMFX8FzikFZHsp2&index=35

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