MEDIA RELEASE

Issued: 14 February 2011

WOODLANDS ‘DETECTIVE’ AT WORK ACROSS REGION

A biodiversity ‘super sleuth’ is visiting farms and roadside reserves across the north east and Goulburn Broken catchments as part of a major conservation program.

Australian National University (ANU) Ecologist, Dr Damian Michael, is monitoring 40 farms and roadside crown land reserves across the region for the presence or absence of birds, reptiles, vegetation and arboreal marsupials, such as Squirrel Gliders, as part of a Threatened Grassy Woodlands project.

Threatened Grassy Woodlands are one of Australia’s most poorly conserved ecosystems. Species include; White Box, Yellow Box and Blakely’s Red Gum Woodlands, Weeping Myall and Buloke Woodlands.

Led by the North East Catchment Management Authority (CMA), the $3 million Australian Government funded ‘Caring for our Country’ project aims to address the decline of the nationally important woodlands in the region. Project partners include the Goulburn Broken and Murray CMAs, DSE, DPI, Trust for Nature, Nature Conservation Trust and the ANU.

As part of the project, private landholders have worked with ANU to develop a long term biodiversity baseline monitoring program.

According to Dr Michael, the monitoring program has the potential to make a substantial contribution to grassy woodland conservation and biodiversity management in Australia.

“The data gathered will provide a baseline against which future biodiversity changes can be monitored,” he said.

The information being collected from the sites is also contributing to a nationally significant Woodlands biodiversity monitoring program established by Professor David Lindenmayer at ANU. This larger program spans eastern and south-eastern Australia.

In coming weeks, Dr Damian Michael will collect information from Woodlands sites in a range of areas, including Barnawartha, Talgarno, Chiltern and Dookie.

North East CMA Project Officer, Ms Mary Munro, said the project partners are working together to ensure that private and public landholders can access funding, technical assistance and best practice research to protect the critically endangered ecosystems.

Threatened grassy woodlands are nationally important because they provide much of the seed used to revegetate farmland and other modified areas, protect stock, crops and pasture from heat, cold and wind and can provide high intensity, short duration grazing opportunities. They are also essential for the survival of rare and threatened species such as the Superb Parrot, Regent Honeyeater, the Swift Parrot and Squirrel Gliders.

Media opportunity: Dr Damian Michael is available for interview/pics at a reserve site at 292 Oates Gap Rd, Barnawartha tomorrow (Tuesday 15 February) from 9.30am – 10am
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