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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

“Keeping a Head on Crocodile Icons”

The recent discovery of a severely injured 5.5m saltwater crocodile near Elizabeth Creek on the Daly River is the latest in a worrying trend. It is not the first time that large “iconic” saltwater crocodiles have either disappeared, been found dead, or have been seen with gunshot wounds near popular recreational waterways in the Northern Territory.

The reasons behind these shootings are usually fear of the dangers posed by large crocs, or from illegal trophy hunting to souvenir a nice wall-mounted skull, or simply out of malice.

But killing large crocodiles, for whatever reason, can damage the Northern Territory as a whole.

The saltwater crocodile is one of our most important assets, responsible for bringing millions of dollars annually into our second-largest industry: tourism. People travel from all around the world to see our crocodiles, and the bigger the crocodile the more impressed the tourist.

Killing large crocodiles is directly removing assets from the Northern Territory, damaging one of our biggest industries, and directly affecting local businesses and landowners. The Northern Territory can offer an experience unique in Australia: being able to see lots of very large crocodiles in the wild. We can't afford to lose that.

Killing big crocs also has other undesirable side-effects. We are just discovering the importance of large crocodiles and their role in moderating the numbers of medium-sized crocodiles, and it's those mid-sized crocs that are far more likely to become problem animals and a danger to both people and livestock.

Dr Adam Britton of Darwin-based Big Gecko is one of the Territory's leading crocodile experts, and he strongly believes that people need to appreciate the real value of large crocodiles in our wild rivers. He's also proud to call the Territory his home and wants to defend the things that make the Territory unique, including its crocodiles.

“Large saltwater crocodiles are a major asset to the NT. They play an important role in controlling numbers of mid-sized crocodiles that are potentially far more dangerous, and they're major icons earning both their keep and our respect in our rivers.”

Dr Britton firmly acknowledges the need to put human safety first, but encourages anyone with concerns about crocodiles large or small to contact relevant Parks and Wildlife staff or Kakadu rangers first.

“If people are concerned about the presence of any crocodile they should contact Parks staff or Kakadu rangers – you can find the number in the Yellow Pages. They can deal with any crocodile that is posing a serious danger to people, but they need to be the ones making those decisions. We must give the NT a chance to preserve some of its most valuable assets.”

Dr Britton can be contacted for further information or comments by phone on either 0407 185182 or 08 89884607 or by email at gecko@crocodilian.com

Included photograph shows an almost 6 metre saltwater crocodile from the Adelaide River who used to be a major draw for tourists.