Historic World First Collection of Critically Endangered Manning River Turtles

- First turtles to join world first insurance population
- Freshwater turtles are critical in maintaining aquatic ecosystems
- Bushfires and Drought responsible for decimating remaining populations

Aussie Ark President Tim Faulkner this week alongside NSW Government representatives, took to the field to survey populations of the critically endangered Manning River turtle. The survey quickly turned into an emergency intervention when due to drought and wildfire, dead animals were located, and many more needing to be rescued from a certain death.

Over 30 endangered Manning River Turtles were rescued and relocated with three being collected to begin a world first insurance population that will save the species from extinction. The first Male, Female and Juvenile were relocated to the state-of-the-art facility at partnering organisation, the Australian Reptile Park where they have undergone initial health checks and are now settling into their new home.

In 2018 Aussie Ark in collaboration with the NSW State Government, and Australian Reptile Park committed to saving the critically endangered Manning River turtle from extinction, after their status was upgraded in 2017 to endangered. Being more than 55 million years old this amazing critter is perhaps the oldest turtle in Australia existing solely in the Manning River Catchment in NSW.

Aussie Ark President Tim Faulkner says “Manning River turtles are vital in maintaining river systems within the Barrington Tops region. Without them aquatic ecosystems tumble”

Mr Faulkner continues “We took notice 2 years ago that this species needed help, and with community support built a specialised facility, to stop the extinction of this species. Now catastrophic events have nearly decimated their remaining populations. This insurance population is a promise for the future and wonderful that we were ready to step in a help”

Since September 2019 the east coast of Australia has been ravaged by fire, more than 10 million hectares of land has been decimated, which has had catastrophic effects for the Manning River turtle habitat. Leaving blackened and destroyed ecosystems in its wake. These bushfires coupled with the worst drought in history
have meant that rivers have stopped flowing and Manning River turtles are now restricted only to what remains of the deepest holes in the area.

Freshwater turtles are nature’s vacuums, they are critical to our freshwater ecosystems, cleaning up river systems, keeping aquatic vegetation in balance, and maintaining the stunning waterways Australia is known for.

Tim Faulkner says “This is what we worked for. This is just the first step in the right direction for this unique, Australian turtle. We could not have done it without our partners and supporters”

The Manning River turtle facility at the Australian Reptile Park would not have been built without the support of The Turtle Conservancy, Steber International, The Happy Wombat, Aus Eco solutions, Manning River Steel and each individual who donated to the cause.

Aussie Ark partners Global Wildlife Conservation, in collaboration with Earth Alliance have launched an international response, Australia Wildfire Fund, to the catastrophic bushfires raging through the country. Pledging $3 million to rebuilding, rewilding and recovering native Australian wildlife. The Australia Wildfire Fund will work in tandem with organisations including Aussie Ark to achieve tangible outcomes for Aussie wildlife.

About Aussie Ark
As a not for profit organisation, Aussie Ark raises the necessary funds to continue its ambitious vision. Investment allows for the construction of captive facilities and predator proof fencing on semi-wild parcels of land. Aussie Ark is a registered environmental organisation and charitable institution under the Australian Charity and Not-for-Profit Commission. Aussie Ark has deductible gift recipient status (DGR status) and is registered for GST purposes. More information at www.aussieark.org.au

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