



Media Release

Wednesday 11 March 2009

Native Raptor Birds Trained to Protect the Environment

Two raptor birds will be VIP guests at a special presentation being hosted by Gecko - Gold Coast and Hinterland Environment Council on the use of these beautifully featured creatures to discourage exploding populations of other species.

The raptors will be joined by their caretaker, Paul Mander, who will speak about his experiences as owner and operator of the Raptor Conservation and Training Centre at Nerang and the conservation work he is doing in conjunction with Queensland Parks and Wildlife, the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary and Australia Zoo.

The special presentation will be held at 6.30pm on Wednesday 25 March at Gecko House, 139 Duringan Street, Currumbin.

Mr Mander's Centre accommodates over 800 birds including Wedge-tailed Eagles, Osprey, Peregrine Falcons, Barn and Sooty Owls, where they are cared for and rehabilitated to the wild. Mr Mander said that some species, such as Eagles, Macaws, Galahs, Falcons and Owls have been trained to assist in important environmental management.

"We've trained Wedge-tailed Eagles to control exploding Ibis populations from Byron Bay to the Sunshine Coast", Mr Mander said, "The program has been particularly successful in reducing Ibis numbers at the Browns Plains tip."

Since the 1970s, Ibis populations in urban areas have grown to alarming numbers due to human waste disposal behaviour and the free food offered. The birds themselves have increased in numbers and have become a nuisance as they scavenge through rubbish bins and scatter refuse through parks and streets.

Mr Mander's work has also been of great benefit to the tourism industry, where his program has been successful in shifting cockatoos away from high population areas on Hamilton Island. As an experienced bird trainer, Mr Mander's raptors have also been featured in movies such as *The Lost World*, *Beastmaster* and several commercials and stage shows.

Gecko presents a guest speaker night on the 4th Wednesday of each month on topical environmental issues. Entry is free but a gold coin donation is requested per glass of wine and nibbles. For catering purposes, please RSVP by the day before the event to speakers@gecko.org.au

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For further information:

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