



## MEDIA RELEASE

# Could Cape York Peninsula be the spider capital of Australia?

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Queensland's Cape York Peninsula could claim to be the spider capital of Australia with over 50 new species discovered.

Spiders the size of dinner plates were found along with tiny arachnids no bigger than a thumbnail.

Researchers from the Queensland Museum including Dr Robert Raven, Dr Barbara Baehr and Robert Whyte, along with Macquarie University's Jim McLean, were part of a team that discovered the spiders during the latest Bush Blitz discovery project in Quinkan Country during a two-week expedition.

Bush Blitz is a species discovery partnership program between the Australian Government, BHP Billiton Sustainable Communities and Earthwatch.

Dr Raven and Dr Baehr said a 23-strong team of scientists worked with indigenous rangers and traditional owners to collect everything from scuba diving tarantulas and ant mimicking spiders to dancing peacock spiders.

"This was one of the largest number of species Bush Blitz has ever discovered during one expedition," they said. "Far north Queensland can boast an extraordinary variety of spiders."

Bush Blitz manager Jo Harding said the new species discoveries weren't possible without the knowledge and assistance of the indigenous rangers and traditional owners who know Quinkan Country.

Western Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation manager Brad Grogan said it was the first time the West Quinkan had been biologically surveyed.

"Working with Bush Blitz allows us to become more aware of the issue that need our attention," Mr Grogan said. "Hopefully this expedition will help us identify areas of natural values that we can protect for the future."

Coordinator of the Laura Rangers, Sue Marsh said "Working with scientists who really understood their fields, and were prepared to share their knowledge, developed the ranger's skills to better manage country was a great opportunity for us."

"We've undertaken 34 Expeditions, but it's likely this expedition will yield the greatest number of new species discoveries so far," Ms Harding said. "With over 1,200 new species discovered by Bush Blitz already we are slowly filling gaps in our knowledge of Australia's biodiversity."

The discovery adds to the success of an expedition on nearby Olkola aboriginal land by Bush Blitz in 2015 when 13 new spider species were discovered.

Images of some of the new discoveries can be found at [www.bushblitz.org.au/media-centre/](http://www.bushblitz.org.au/media-centre/)

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