

From: Mike Letnic
Subject: Rewilding arid Australia, PhD Scholarship University of New South Wales

Post-graduate scholarship, Ecological outcomes of rewilding, University of New South Wales, Australia

We are seeking outstanding applicants to work on a rewilding project we are conducting in outback Australia.

Australia has the world's worst record of mammal extinctions, with many of the mid-range mammals impacted by exotic species, particularly foxes and cats. In arid ecosystems, the extinction of native mammals and loss of ecological services they provide has been accompanied by severe soil erosion and shifts in vegetation composition.

The Centre for Ecosystem Science (CES), through its Wild Deserts project, has attracted significant government support (over the next 10 years), to embark on one of the nation's most significant "rewilding" initiatives to redress the problem of mammal extinctions and land degradation in arid Australia. The Wild Deserts project will bridge the gap between the disciplines of reintroduction biology and restoration ecology by using reintroductions of locally extinct mammals into two, large (20km²) predator-proof enclosures to restore ecosystems in Sturt National Park in far-western New South Wales.

Key questions for research relate to understanding the effects that reintroduced mammals (7 locally extinct mammals to be reintroduced) have on ecosystem structure and function. This PhD project would focus on measuring changes in the soils, vegetation and fauna within and outside the enclosures to determine how the removal of exotic species and subsequent reintroduction of native mammals affects ecosystem structure and function. The findings will reveal how innovative "rewilding" strategies incorporating the ecological functions of mammals can be used by land-managers to restore Australian ecosystems.

This scholarship comes with \$40,000 AUS per year stipend and \$10,000 of research funding per year for 4 years under UNSW's Scientia Scholarship program. It is open to both Australian and international applicants. Australian applicants can start early in 2017, the expected start date for international applicants is August 2017. Go to

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for more information about the Scientia Scholarship program and our search for world changers at UNSW.

For additional information contact Associate Professor Mike Letnic on m.letnic@unsw.edu.au

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