

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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University's science stars shortlisted in 2016 Australian Museum Eureka Prizes

Two University of Tasmania projects – one studying the complex biocycles in our oceans and the other mapping the distribution of marine species – have been shortlisted for the prestigious Australian Museum Eureka Prizes, which celebrate excellence in science.

Distinguished Professor of Economic Geology Ross Large, from the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence in Ore Deposits (CODES), and Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) Associate Professor Gretta Pecl led the successful teams, which have been announced as finalists today.

Professor Large led a collaborative team, including local geologists and palaeontologists from South Australia's Flinders University – together with a group of international researchers – which has revealed the critical role of the trace element selenium in the cycle of life and death in the oceans over the last 600 million years.

The team – including Professor Leonid Danyushevsky, Dr Jacqui Halpin and Dr Jeffrey Steadman – was shortlisted for the UNSW Eureka Prize for Excellence in Interdisciplinary Scientific Research.

Professor Large said the shortlisting was welcome recognition for the efforts of the multi-disciplinary group, which covers the fields of geology, oceanography, palaeontology, toxicology and evolution biology, and their laboratories.

“It demonstrates we are doing world-class research in vitally important areas of understanding, including the evolution of life,” he said.

Associate Professor Gretta Pecl and her team – including national coordinator Dr Jemina Stuart-Smith, communications officer Yvette Barry and senior technical advisor Peter Walsh – have been shortlisted for the Department of Industry,

Innovation and Science Eureka Prize for Innovation in Citizen Science for their Redmap Australia project.

Redmap (Range Extension Database and Mapping) encourages citizen scientists around Australia to upload photos and sightings of marine life not commonly found at their local fishing, diving and swimming spots. Each photo is then verified by a taxonomic expert. These community observations help scientists track which species may be moving away from their usual home range in response to warming seas.

Professor Pecl said the shortlisting was a welcome acknowledgement of the significant contributions many fishers, divers, boaters and scientists around Australia had made towards understanding the effects of marine climate change.

“Redmap Australia is an innovative collaboration between over 80 scientists, thousands of citizen scientists and 15 institutes around the country, which is providing an early indication of how our marine ecosystems are changing so we are better prepared to adapt to these changes,” she said.

The University of Tasmania won Eureka Prizes in 2013 and 2014 for its dingo research and Reef Life Survey projects respectively.

The 2016 awards will be announced at a gala dinner in Sydney on 31 August.

For the full shortlist and more information about the awards, visit:

<http://australianmuseum.net.au/eureka>

MEDIA OPPORTUNITY

Distinguished Professor Ross Large is available on 0418 352 501. Click here to read more about his team’s work: <http://www.utas.edu.au/news/2015/11/4/22-uncovering-the-missing-link-in-darwins-theory-of-evolution/>

Associate Professor Gretta Pecl is available on 0408 626 792. Click here to read more about her team’s work: <http://www.imas.utas.edu.au/community/citizen-science/citizen-science-lbs/citizen-science/redmap>

Images of both are also available by emailing Media.Office@utas.edu.au

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