

MEDIA RELEASE

Australian Tourism Exchange 2016

Moonlit Sanctuary celebrates 15 years of Australian wildlife

From humble beginnings in 2001, Moonlit Wildlife Sanctuary owner and director Michael Johnson initially opened the park at nights to host its renowned lantern-lit tours for visitors to experience the fascinating activities of Australian nocturnal animals.

Six years ago in response to the park's growing popularity Moonlit Sanctuary started opening during the day and now houses over 60 species, more than 300 animals and welcomes over 75,000 visitors each year.

Moonlit Sanctuary is dedicated to conservation and educating visitors from around the world about Australia's wildlife and importance of protecting endangered and threatened species.

Moonlit Sanctuary director Michael Johnson says: "In the last 15 years we've celebrated some significant achievements; from opening world-first enclosures and managing successful breeding programs, to launching conservation shows and winning awards for our eco-tourism work."

In 2012, Moonlit Sanctuary opened the world's first walk-in glider enclosure as part of its lantern-lit tours where visitors can experience tiny feathertail gliders dart around and larger yellow-bellied gliders gracefully swoop overhead in their 20 metre aviary.

Moonlit Sanctuary's conservation breeding programs include establishing a colony of the critically endangered eastern bettongs (now southern bettongs), Julia Creek dunnarts, orange-bellied parrots, and the first mainland breeding of eastern quolls since they went extinct on the mainland in 1963.

"With less than 40 orange-bellied parrots left in the wild, in 2014 we were proud to successfully breed and release one of our parrots at the Melaleuca breeding site on the south coast of Tasmania. We have big plans to boost our population of 10 to ensure the survival of this rare species," Michael added.

Last year the Australian Threatened Species Commissioner Gregory Andrews opened the Sanctuary's southern hairy-nosed wombat exhibit – one of the largest in the world and features glass viewing panels that allow visitors to come face-to-face with the endangered and mysterious marsupials.

The Sanctuary has remained small and its focus on Australian wildlife and up-close encounters has attracted celebrities and personalities, including Hugh Jackman who shared his visit and experience on American talk show [Live with Kelly and Michael](#).



The award-winning Moonlit Sanctuary has been recognised twice with the Victorian Tourism Award for Ecotourism and won the Sustainable Cities Protection of the Environment Award for its Tasmanian devils.

Earlier this year Moonlit Sanctuary launched its new and popular *Conservation in Action* show to educate visitors from around the world about the plight of Australian endangered animals featuring dingoes, spot-tailed quolls, tawny frogmouths, rufous bettongs, barking owls, major mitchells and more.

Located only a 50 minute drive from Melbourne's CBD and on the way to Phillip Island, Moonlit Sanctuary is set on 10 hectares of bushland allowing visitors to view Australian wildlife in their natural habitat.

For more information visit www.moonlitsanctuary.com.au.

Interviews available with: Moonlit Sanctuary Director, Michael Johnson

Media contact: Kendall Munns info@kendallmunns.com.au 0406 742 768

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