MEDIA RELEASE
24 November 2014

Gardens’ Mycologist awarded the 2014 Australian Natural History Medallion

Dr Tom May, Senior Mycologist at the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne has been awarded the 2014 Australian Natural History Medallion by the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria.

The Australian Natural History Medallion is awarded each year to the person judged to have made the most meritorious contribution to the understanding of Australian Natural History.

Dr May’s contribution stems not only from scientific research at the National Herbarium of Victoria, but also his crucial role in the founding and continued growth of Fungimap, a community mapping scheme for fungi and one of the largest citizen science groups in Australia.

“I am so thrilled to receive this award from the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria, which has a rich heritage and a long-standing, wonderful relationship with the Royal Botanic Gardens,” said Dr May.

As Dr May explains, Fungimap has been bringing together fungi enthusiasts from all over the country since its humble beginnings in 1995.

“When I had the idea for Fungimap, I thought that a handful of field naturalists would contribute, and the mapping scheme would run for a couple of years,” he said.

“Almost 20 years later, more than 100,000 fungi records have been submitted, from almost 1,000 people and organisations from around Australia.”

Fungimap is now the single biggest contributor of fungi records to the Atlas of Living Australia (ALA), which contains information on all the known species in Australia collected from a range of data providers including museums, herbaria, community groups, government departments, individuals and universities.

A key part of Fungimap’s success is its highly accessible Fungi Down Under field guide. Written in plain English, it lists 100 target species and was the first fungi field guide in the world to incorporate maps showing the known distribution of species.

“One of the keys to the success of Fungimap was getting people to look for readily recognisable target species,” explains Dr May.

“Target species included Green Skinhead, Forest Prettymouth, blue Pixies Parasol, bizarre Anemone Stinkhorn, cute Little Ping-pong Bat, and Vegetable Caterpillars that mummify underground-feeding moth larvae.”

Dr May is one of a number of Mycologists currently working on the second edition of Fungi Down Under. Due for release in 2016, the second edition will include 200 target species.

Media enquiries: Robyn Merrett (03) 9252 2387 or 0438 656 144

www.rbg.vic.gov.au
Another of Tom’s long-term projects, FunKey, is due for release in early December. FunKey is an innovative interactive key to the different kinds of mushrooms and will be available for desktop computers and as an app from early December.

Prof Tim Entwisle, Director and Chief Executive of the Royal Botanic Gardens, congratulated Dr May on his achievement. "This is richly deserved recognition for the importance of science at the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne, and for one of our most passionate and influential scientists. Great for Tom and great for fungi!"

About Fungimap

Fungimap is a non-profit, nation-wide, citizen-science organisation dedicated to furthering the conservation and knowledge of Australian fungi. The emphasis is on enjoying and learning about fungi and the focus is on macrofungi in the natural environment.

Fungimap is based at the National Herbarium of Victoria in the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne. It is primarily a community-based mapping scheme that uses information gathered by volunteer observers across Australia, from professionals to amateurs, to map the distribution of target species of Australian fungi. The target species have been selected for their relative ease of identification and the fact that they are generally widespread. Volunteer observers are encouraged to pick up a copy of Fungimap’s Fungi Down Under field guide which is a valuable identification tool.

If you are interested in fungi, you can contribute to the Fungimap project by sending in records of any fungus you come across, either at home or in your travels. As so little is known about Australian fungi, all contributions are very valuable, even if you only learn to recognise a couple of species.

More information: www.fungimap.org.au