**Scientist With An Eye for New Species and a Passion for Australia and the Pacific Appointed as New Director and Chief Scientist of the Australian Museum Research Institute**

Professor Kristofer M. Helgen joins Australia’s First Museum

with over 100 Mammal Discoveries to his Name

Sydney, 25 April, 2020: The Australian Museum (AM), the nation’s first museum, today announced the appointment of Professor Kristofer M. Helgen as Director and Chief Scientist of the Australian Museum Research Institute (AMRI).

Kim McKay AO, Director and CEO of the Australian Museum, said that following an international search the AM was pleased to announce that Professor Helgen will lead the Australian Museum Research Institute from June 2020.

Professor Helgen was most recently Professor of Biological Sciences at the University of Adelaide.  He has focussed his research primarily on fieldwork with living animals and research in museum collections to document the richness of life, explore global change, and contribute to important problems in biomedicine.

Professor Helgen, 40, who originally hails from Minnesota in the United States, gained his undergraduate degree in Biology at Harvard University and his Ph.D. in Zoology as a Fulbright Fellow at the University of Adelaide.  From 2008-2017 he served as Curator-in-Charge of Mammals at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C., overseeing the world’s largest museum collection of mammals and most-visited public mammals gallery.

“It’s fantastic to have someone of Kris’ standing join the Australian Museum.  His global track-record is outstanding and he has conducted field research in more than 50 countries documenting and naming some 100 previously overlooked species of living mammals,” Ms McKay said.

“Added to this is Kris’ deep understanding of museums and museum collections, and experience leading major expeditions in the Pacific and around the world and his commitment to conserving the natural environment.”

“He will undoubtedly further inspire the extraordinary work of the team of over 100 scientists we have at the Australian Museum Research Institute and take it to a new level,” she said.

Professor Helgen’s central interest is the study of biodiversity – the richness of life on earth - and he says there is no better place to continue his work in this area than at the Australian Museum.

“The opportunity to take the helm as Chief Scientist of such an important global resource as the AM is incredible and I couldn’t be more excited about the chance to join the Australian Museum, an institution I’ve been visiting for research for more than 20 years, since my student days,” he said.

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“Internationally, the reputation of the Australian Museum is as THE hub of natural and cultural diversity for the whole of the Asia Pacific region. My career has been steeped in the culture of museums and I am excited to bring both my experience and enthusiasm to this role.”

A dedicated public communicator in support of biodiversity discovery and conservation, Prof. Helgen’s expeditions and discoveries have been featured in two major documentary series by the BBC Natural History Unit and are regularly profiled in the media.

Helgen holds professorial and other honorary academic appointments at George Mason University (Virginia), the Natural History Museum (London), the American Museum of Natural History (New York), the Bishop Museum (Hawaii), the South Australian Museum (Adelaide), and the National Geographic Society (Washington, D.C.), where he was inducted as a National Geographic Emerging Explorer in 2009. He is also a fellow at the Australian Museum (Sydney).

In 2016, Helgen was awarded the James McWha Award for Excellence from the University of Adelaide and the Westbrook Free Lectureship at the Wagner Free Institute of Science in Philadelphia. In 2017, he was appointed as a Full Professor at the University of Adelaide, and Deputy Director of the university’s Centre for Applied Conservation.  He serves on the Board of Zoos South Australia, as Deputy Chair of the Board of the International Koala Centre of Excellence, and has been a Chief Investigator and director of the Adelaide University Node of the Australian Research Council’s Centre of Excellence for Australian Biodiversity and Heritage.

Kris Helgen has been named on the list of the “Most Innovative Under 40” by Business Insider magazine and is a member of the Innovation Board of TCS World Travel.

Professor Helgen succeeds Dr. Rebecca Johnson who led AMRI for five years after establishing the AM’s Centre for Wildlife Genomics and is now the Chief Scientist and Associate Director of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History, Washington, D.C.

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