

Multi-million Hidden Vale UQ Wildlife Centre opens

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THE multi-million dollar Hidden Vale UQ Wildlife Centre, which will be home to some of the country's most threatened species, opens today.

It is a collaboration between Queensland tourism entrepreneurs Graham and Jude Turner and The University of Queensland.

The facility is on the Turners' 3100 hectare nature refuge, Spicers Hidden Vale Retreat, which is the ideal habitat for some of the rarest and most threatened species in Australia.

It will combine wildlife conservation with livestock management at the historic beef cattle station first settled in 1871.

The Turners have committed more than \$18.5 million to the project from the Turner Family Foundation in what is believed to be the largest philanthropic contribution to conservation in Queensland.

The contribution includes building costs and a donation of ongoing funding to support research grants and UQ operation of the facility for breeding and rehabilitating wildlife and protecting endangered species over the next 30 years.

Graham Turner is a founder and managing director of Flight Centre Travel Group and is also a qualified vet and a passionate environmentalist.

He said the aim was to conserve the area's significant natural and cultural resources and values for future generations.

"The objective is to deliver resilient ecosystems with representative, self-sustaining populations of fauna and flora endemic to the Scenic Rim region, supported by applied scientific research," he said

"From this year, the Hidden Vale UQ Wildlife Centre will, for the first time, be able to offer students hands-on access to learn wildlife management techniques and to study a diverse range of native and endangered animals.

"This presents exciting opportunities to heighten the quality and depth of research and learning about endangered and vulnerable native wildlife.

"Hidden Vale's size, the variety of native animals and vegetation and the opportunity to interact with cattle and pest management activities make it an ideal centre for learning."

UQ vice-chancellor professor Peter Høj said the project and donation were extraordinary.

"This astounding act of philanthropy will create change for conservation and also for UQ staff and students for generations to come," he said.

The Hidden Vale UQ Wildlife Centre is being made available to UQ staff and students and will include a captive wildlife and breeding centre and a permanent release facility.