



Fatal croc attacks rising in NT

AUSTRALIA: Nature bites back

Fatal crocodile attacks are increasing in the Top End, in Australia's Northern Territory, reports **Lucy Hughes Jones**, of AAP.

THE number of people killed by crocodiles in the Top End is on the rise, but researchers chalk that up to an increase in the human population more than higher croc numbers.

A study by the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre, Royal Darwin Hospital and the Menzies School of Health Research has found croc-related deaths have jumped in the past two decades.

The report shows 14 people died from croc attacks between 2005 and 2014, compared with 10 deaths in the 33 years to 2004.

NCCTRC director David Read said interactions between the apex predators and people had become more frequent with more people living in the territory.

And although the croc population exploded up to 100,000 across Australia's tropical north after hunting

was outlawed in 1971, numbers have plateaued.

The only fatal croc attack since 2014 occurred in January when a man from a remote indigenous community was killed by a 3.3m beast after wading into a notorious croc-infested river crossing in West Arnhem Land.

"There is a fair amount of complacency and a lack of care taken around the water up here," Dr Read said.

The debate over commercial croc safaris reignited recently after rangers announced a 66% spike in croc captures in the past year.

The Northern Territory Government supports regulated trophy hunting in collaboration with indigenous groups but the idea is unlikely to gain traction in the face of long-standing, staunch federal government opposition.