



What's living in your street?

The Atlas of Living Australia will tell you.

Within 5 km of News Limited in Holt Street, Sydney for example there are reports of at least 3,500 different animal species, and 2,400 plant species.

ABC Southbank in Melbourne is a neighbour to more than 1200 animals and 519 plants. In the coming months the records will be more detailed as institutions add their records.

“But to get a really comprehensive view of living Australia we need the help of the public. We're calling on Australians to re-engage with the natural world. We want them to report on their neighbours – not their human neighbours but on the plants and animals in their gardens, nature strips, paddocks and parks,” said Mr Donald Hobern, Director of the Atlas of Living Australia.

To see what's living in your area go to <http://biocache.ala.org.au/explore/your-area> and take a look. Then click on share to contribute your own observations or photos.

“There are huge gaps in our knowledge of Australian biodiversity. The best estimate we have for the number of Australian species is 570,000, and nearly three quarters of these are unknown or undescribed,” said Dr Kevin Thiele, Director of the *IdentifyLife* component of the Atlas which provides a series of tools or keys to help people identify species.

“Everyone can help to build a better picture of Australia's biodiversity by contributing sightings and photos to the Atlas website. Even a sighting of a common bird in your backyard, neighbourhood or paddock may increase our understanding of how that species is distributed across the country. The species may not have been recorded before in that location, or it may not have been recorded there for a long time or its distribution may be changing.” Mr Hobern explained.

Mr Hobern added, “Australia has a fine tradition of amateurs and enthusiasts contributing to scientific understanding. Rica Erickson, one of the foremost amateur natural historians in the 1900s, wrote extensively on botany and birds and made a significant contribution to the Australian scientific knowledge-base.”

“Now, with modern web-based technologies, enthusiasts can build and share information like never before, allowing us to better understand species and monitor changes in species distribution and the environment.” Mr Hobern commented.

The Atlas of Living Australia is a national initiative focused on making Australia's biodiversity information more accessible and useable online. It's a partnership between the CSIRO; Australian museums, herbaria and other biological collections, the Australian Government, and local communities.

The Atlas website already holds over 23 million records on the distribution of Australia's fauna and flora, 170,000 species pages, descriptions, state-of-the-art mapping tools with over 350 layers, photos, extensive data-sets, identification keys and heritage literature.

"Making this vast amount of biological information accessible online through a single website has already made a difference to research projects looking at the impact of environmental change on habitat and species." Mr Hobern said.

"With the help of enthusiasts and amateurs, the Atlas is creating enormous possibilities for new research that will benefit Australia economically and help manage the environment." Mr Hobern continued.

The Atlas is easy to use. To add a sighting and/or photo:

- visit www.ala.org.au and click on 'Log in' in the top right hand corner of the homepage.
- register your email and password and click on the 'Share sightings, photos and information' button on the right hand side of the homepage.
- choose the 'Sightings', 'Photos', 'Links, ideas, information' or 'Datasets' button.
- enter the species name and click on the magnifying glass to the right of the text box.
- click on the 'Record a sighting' or 'Share a photo' link.
- enter your sighting or upload your photo and submit your contribution.
- check the site in a few days and see your sighting and/or on the species records and distribution map.

For help, email support@ala.org.au

For interviews or further information, please contact Lynne Sealie on 02 6246 5901 or 0419 876 370 or Donald Hobern on 0437 990 208.

The Atlas of Living Australia is a national collaboration between the CSIRO, the Australian Museum, Museums and Art Galleries of Northern Territory, Museum Victoria, Queensland Museum, South Australian Museum, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Western Australian Museum, The Council of Australasian Museum Directors (CAMD), The Council of Heads of Australasian Herbaria (CHAH), The Council of Heads of Australian Collections of Microorganisms (CHACM), The Council of Heads of Australian Entomological Collections (CHAEC), The Council of Heads of Australian Faunal Collections (CHAFC), Southern Cross University, The University of Adelaide, The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (SEWPaC).