



MEDIA RELEASE– FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Atlas of Living Australia (ALA) and Museum Victoria (MV) are proud to announce the launch of the Australian Biodiversity Heritage Library (BHL).

"Nearly 50,000 historical biological titles are now freely available online, providing a significant resource for biologists, researchers and enthusiasts." Dr Elycia Wallis, the BHL Australia project lead at MV said.

"The high-quality scans include the whole book – text, covers, library labels, marbled endpapers and marks of age. The BHL puts these useful, and often beautiful books in the hands of everyone." Dr Wallis continued.

Mr Greg Whitbread, an Australian botanist attending the International Botanical Congress in Melbourne this week, said "The BHL is helping me every day to find original species descriptions online. This is an invaluable resource for scientists working on the National Species List or any aspect of taxonomy."

"The first thing you'll notice on the BHL Australia website is the local influence; the page is adorned with beautiful illustrations of Australian wildlife and Australian books are featured." Dr Wallis said. Please visit <http://bhl.ala.org.au/> for more information.

"The BHL is a global partnership to scan historical biological literature and make it freely available online. It's especially useful to scientists looking for original species descriptions or researching particular species, but it's also a fascinating and user-friendly site for anyone interested in natural history or rare books." Mr Donald Hobern, Director of the Atlas of Living Australia said.

There is still plenty of Australian content to be added, including some in-house journals from the Queensland Museum and the Western Australian Museum.

"Museum Victoria will be leading new scanning projects starting with the *Memoirs of Museum Victoria*, containing the first scientific descriptions of many Victorian animal species. This will be very handy for biologists worldwide who don't have ready access to hard copies of this journal. Later on, rare books from MV and the libraries of other Australian institutions will be scanned and uploaded into the BHL." Dr Wallis said.

BHL is the latest component of the ALA to go live. The ALA is a national project focused on making biodiversity information accessible and useable online (<http://www.ala.org.au>). It is a partnership between CSIRO, Australia's national science agency, Australian museums, herbaria and other natural history collections and the Australian Government.

For interviews or further information, please contact Lynne Sealie on 02 6246 5901 or 0419 876 370, Dr Ely Wallis on 0403 360 462 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).