

**20 May 2011**

**WORLD FIRST INTERACTIVE ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF BIODIVERSITY  
SHOWCASED AT QUEENSLAND MUSEUM**

Queensland Museum today encouraged all Queenslanders interested in their natural world to discover more about Australian plants, animals and microbes through the Atlas of Living Australia – a world first interactive online encyclopaedia of biodiversity.

“Queensland Museum has made a significant contribution to The Atlas of Living Australia, a collaborative research tool using the latest technology to pull together information held in biological collections around Australia,” Queensland Museum’s Head of Biodiversity and Chair of the Atlas of Living Australia Management Committee, Dr John Hooper said.

“Our State collection, from single celled protozoans to blue whales and the associated scientific research undertaken on them can now be used in new ways and shared internationally via the Atlas.

“Other Queensland agencies involved in the Atlas include the Brisbane Botanic Gardens, the Queensland Herbarium, James Cook University, the University of Queensland and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources’ through their Coastal Bird Atlas.

“By bringing together distribution data for Australian plants, animals and microorganisms, and combining it with descriptions, images, literature, identification tools and molecular data, researchers and the public can now explore and analyse this information in new ways.

“Making this vast amount of biological information accessible online, through a single easy to use portal, has already made a difference to research projects looking at the impact of environmental change on habitat and species.

“Most significantly, this project has also pulled together many local government, state, territory, commonwealth and university biodiversity collection agencies, and natural resource management community groups, to work together for the first time, on a project of national and international significance.

“Members of the public are also becoming involved, with citizen science projects such as the Queensland Museum’s Wild Backyards initiative with Quest Newspapers, and bird surveys managed by Birds Australia.

“These activities encourage people to take a closer look at the rich biodiversity that surrounds us, and to contribute their own observations,” Dr Hooper said.

Donald Hobern, Director of the Atlas of Living Australia said, "The Atlas would never have come into existence without the forward-thinking contributions of researchers and collections throughout the country.

"We are very excited about the opportunity to make all of this information useful and informative both at national and local levels."

The Atlas of Living Australia is a national initiative involving more than 60 biological collections from State Museums and Herbaria, State Departments, universities and microbial collections to unlock information from over A\$1 billion worth of biodiversity resources held around Australia.

It is funded by the Australian Government under the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy and the Education Investment Fund.

The Atlas is a collaboration between CSIRO; the Queensland Museum; the Australian Museum; Museum Victoria; the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery; the Western Australian Museum; Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory; South Australian Museum; Southern Cross University; the University of Adelaide; the Councils of Heads of Australasian Herbaria, Australian Faunal Collections, Australian Entomological Collections, Australian Collections of Microorganisms and Australasian Museum Directors; and the Australian Government Departments of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) and Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (formerly DEWHA), including the Australian Biological Resources Study.

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