



Media Release

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17th Century Dutch explorers help the Atlas reach a major milestone - 30 million records!

The Atlas of Living Australia added its 30 millionth species occurrence record last week, making it the largest collection of rich information on Australia's plants, animals and fungi <www.ala.org.au>.

The Atlas, a collaboration between all Australian museums, herbaria and biological collections, CSIRO, Adelaide and Southern Cross Universities and the Commonwealth Government, reached this milestone when over half a million records from Birdlife Australia were incorporated. Some of these records come from the diaries of 17th Century Dutch navigators, such as the record for a Brush Bronzewing dated 1629.

"The Atlas is a unique national repository for rich data on all Australian life forms – from bacteria to kangaroos, land-based to marine, native and non-native," says Dr John La Salle, Director of the Atlas of Living Australia.

"Together with information about the whole range of Australian species, the Atlas contains many different types of data, including photos, distribution, maps and mapping tools, DNA sequences, scientific and common names, conservation status, identification keys and heritage literature."

The Atlas provides access to over 350 large and small datasets, from the NSW Government's Atlas of Wildlife to the records of a community group who look after a local creek.

Dr John Hooper from the Queensland Museum, Chair of the Atlas Management Committee and Chair of the Council of Heads of Australian Faunal Collections (CHAFC), noted: "This is a substantial milestone for the Atlas community. The array of records and tools now available are providing value to researchers, teachers, students, natural resource managers and anyone who would like to know more about the living world, identify species or understand their distribution."

One of the applications in the Atlas, 'Explore Your Area', allows you to enter an address or location to find the recorded species nearby. At the click of a button you can create a list and map of species that have been found in your local area and photos of most of them.

"Local and traditional knowledge is invaluable for tracking where Australian animals and plants are distributed across the country. Even if a plant or animal is common in your area, it may never have been officially recorded there, only because no-one has conducted a technical survey of what's there. If the species list is incomplete, it only takes a few minutes to add your own sightings and photos of Australian species." said Dr John La Salle.

For further information, interviews and photos, please contact Lynne Sealie on 02 6246 5901 or 0419 876 370 or Dr John La Salle on 02 6246 4262 or 0419 303 453.