

# Biodiversity: I can do that

## What is biodiversity?

Biodiversity, short for biological diversity, describes the whole variety of life on earth. It is the sum of the land, its wildlife and the cycles of nutrients, energy and water. It encompasses all living things, from human beings to micro-organisms and the habitats in which they live, and it also includes the genetic material within individual species.

## Why is biodiversity important?

Every native plant and animal, however large or small, has a part to play in maintaining the health of our natural environment. From the smallest soil invertebrate that breaks down leaf litter and helps maintain the soil, to the birds, insects, reptiles and mammals that pollinate plants and contribute to nutrient cycles, each plays an important role.

Biodiversity also helps to control pests and disease-carrying organisms and can reduce the incidence of extreme weather events, bushfires and drought.

## Biodiversity - I can do that

You can play a direct role in helping us to safeguard Australia's amazing diversity of plants and animals. Whether it's helping to restore threatened grasslands to again provide habitat for small mammals or controlling invasive weeds, repairing erosion or implementing fire management plans, you will be helping to give our threatened plants and animals a much-needed lifeline.

Practical things anyone can do in their daily life to protect and enhance biodiversity.

## In the garden

- **Wildlife gardening** is one of the very best ways to get back in touch with nature.
  - [www.sgaonline.org.au/?p=1174](http://www.sgaonline.org.au/?p=1174)
- **Birdbaths** give welcome relief to birds during hot summer months.
- Create a **bug house** - this can be as simple as a pile of bricks and old planks
- **Plant native** to your local area where ever you can.
- Create a **Butterfly garden**
- Make a **mini wetlands** - this can be as simple as a few feet in diameter.
- **Plant your own vegie garden** - large or small they all help to remind us of how precious food production is and help lower your carbon footprint.
- **Say no to pesticides** - Choose non-toxic or environmentally friendly pesticides for your plants. Picking pests like snails and slugs off by hand means no toxins in the soil.
- **Hollows and dead trees** - If you have a dead tree on your property, leave it standing as habitat for birds, mammals and the many insects that will live in it's trunk.
- **Nestboxes** - Australia boasts an amazing and diverse range of native fauna, including our brightly coloured parrot species, sugar gliders, our ever-present possums and elusive micro-bats.  
[www.latrobe.edu.au/wildlife/nursery/nestboxes](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/wildlife/nursery/nestboxes)
- Become a **weed warden** - Plant invasions into natural ecosystems are one of the major threats to the conservation of biological diversity. [www.weeds.gov.au/publications/books/bioimpact.html](http://www.weeds.gov.au/publications/books/bioimpact.html)

## Pets and livestock

- **Dogs and cats** - can badly injure or even kill wildlife so keep your pets under control, especially in the forest.
- Ensure that your **pets are desexed**. They are less likely to stray and will stop them from mating with feral animals. Any unwanted pets or litters should be re-homed.
- Use **wildlife friendly fencing** - Say no to barbed wire and assess if you need fencing at all.  
[www.wildlifefriendlyfencing.com](http://www.wildlifefriendlyfencing.com)
- **Buying livestock** - consider choosing rare breeds.

## Out and about

- **Don't throw food** from the car.
- Carry the number of your **local wildlife shelter** - [www.hepburnwildlifeshelter.com](http://www.hepburnwildlifeshelter.com)
- **Shopping** - be sure to choose for biodiversity. Locally grown, organic produce have much less impact on the environment.
- Support **leisure activities** that enhance biodiversity.

## Talking to people

- **Teach those around you** to love and appreciate biodiversity and the environment.
- **Talk to friends and family** about how important biodiversity is.
- **Be positive** about change for biodiversity and encourage people to help you protect biodiversity.
- **Teach new neighbours** how to live with wildlife.
- Conservation of Australia's biodiversity website - [www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity](http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity)

## In the forest

- **Observe wildlife from a distance** - don't disturb sleeping wildlife or creatures that are sunning themselves.
- **Do not take plants or bones** from the forest.
- Where ever possible, **stay on paths or walking tracks** to avoid disturbing the forest.
- **Enjoy the biodiversity** in the forest.
- Don't create a lot of **noise in the forest** - wildlife rely heavily on sound to alert them to danger.
- **Take your rubbish** home.
- Only **light a fire in proper fireplaces** with adequate clearing around it.
- When in forests, **please drive slowly**, especially at dawn and dusk when animals might be feeding beside roads.

## In general

- **Become a citizen scientist** - keep records and contribute to existing projects like the Bird Atlas or Fungi Map. [www.birdsaustralia.com.au](http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au)
- **Stay informed** on biodiversity issues by subscribing to newsletters online. [www.marketsforchange.org](http://www.marketsforchange.org)
- **Support fundraising** ventures by environmental groups.
- **Join an environmental group** to support the work they do. [www.wombatforestcare.org.au](http://www.wombatforestcare.org.au)
- **Have an opinion** and share it.
  - [www.facebook.com/pages/Hepburn-Shire-Residents/109170442505959](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Hepburn-Shire-Residents/109170442505959)

## Success stories

- Amazonian rainforest deforestation has slowed from 2.7 million hectares in 2003/2004 to 700,000 hectares in 2009/2010.
- Green Peace's Kit Kat campaign
- Australian Koala Foundation. [www.savethekoala.com](http://www.savethekoala.com)

## What others are doing for biodiversity

- Trust for nature - [www.trustfornature.org.au](http://www.trustfornature.org.au)
- The Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme - [noosabiosphere.org.au](http://noosabiosphere.org.au)
- Melbourne zoo - [wild.zoo.org.au/bushfires](http://wild.zoo.org.au/bushfires)
- Wombat Forestcare - Research, Education, Action
- Direct action organisations - [www.seashepherd.org](http://www.seashepherd.org)