

## Citizen Science: How you can help native animals from the palm of your hand

By Sophie Monaco, Environmental Specialist

Remember when Pokémon Go took over the world and hordes of people got up off the couch to look for elusive creatures hanging out in our suburbs and bushland? That was so 2016.

But, did you know, you can use your phone to look for native Australian animals and contribute to science?

### What is Citizen Science?

Citizen science is the participation of amateur and non-professional scientists in conducting scientific research. This is fast becoming a growing and important source of data for research organisations as more people outside of professional scientific circles become engaged and interested in contributing to science. Citizen science proves particularly useful in conducting large-scale observational studies as it allows for a drastic increase in available manpower and reduces financial strains on projects while not explicitly requiring much training. The challenge with citizen science is that data obtained may be of a lower quality and accuracy because most participants won't have scientific expertise. With projects carefully designed to take the full advantage of citizen science, the scope of data that citizen science is capable of producing more than makes up for any shortcomings.



### How to be a Citizen Scientist

The beauty of citizen science is that anyone can be a Citizen Scientist. There are hundreds of projects occurring Australia wide which are calling for people to assist with data collection and analysis. Projects range from recording sighted animals and plants in a database or app to identifying animals in pictures taken from remote camera locations.

The only requirement to be a Citizen Scientist is a mobile phone or computer and enthusiasm! It's also a great way to get out of the house and explore our amazing natural bushland, learn more about native species and contribute to important research.

 <p><b>MALLEEFOWL RECOVERY</b></p> <p>Started 3.1 years ago  <b>Birdlife Australia Ltd</b>        Malleefowl occur across semi-arid Australia, from inland NSW and north-wester...</p> <p><b>Status:</b> Project Ended        Start date: 11 September, 2014        End date: 14 September, 2014</p>	 <p><b>IMPORTANT BIRD AND BIODIVERSITY AREAS</b></p> <p>Started 1.8 years ago  <b>Birdlife Australia Ltd</b>        Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) are sites of global bird CONSERV...</p> <p><b>Status:</b> Project Ongoing</p>	 <p><b>GREAT WESTERN WOODLANDS</b></p> <p>Started 6.8 years ago  <b>Birdlife Australia Ltd</b>        The GWW Project provides baseline data on the birds that are present in the G...</p> <p><b>Status:</b> Project Ongoing        Start date: 31 December, 2010</p>	 <p><b>EAGA BIODIVERSITY MONITORING</b></p> <p>Started 9.8 years ago  <b>Birdlife Australia Ltd</b>        BirdLife Australia has teamed up with the Eastern Alliance for Greenhouse Act...</p> <p><b>Status:</b> Project Ongoing        Start date: 31 December, 2007</p>
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Finding a project is easy. Head to the [Atlas of Living Australia website](#) and search through the list of Projects to find one in your area that interests you.

As October 23<sup>rd</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> 2017 is Bird Week a great idea to participate in a citizen science project is the Great Aussie Backyard Bird Count.

### **Aussie Backyard Bird Count**

The Aussie Backyard Bird Count (ABBC) is a citizen science program run by Birdlife Australia every year in October. The purpose of the Backyard Bird Count is to obtain valuable data on bird communities throughout Australia and capture the changes bird populations are undergoing, and subsequently the environment, particularly within urban areas.

Through the Backyard Bird Count Birdlife Australia are collecting data to create an effective national dataset.

### **To get involved with the Aussie Backyard Bird Count**

1. Download the App on your phone.
2. Between the 23<sup>rd</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> of October head outside with your phone and pick a spot to observe birds (this can be a park, local bushland or your front yard)
3. Record the birds you see over a 20 minute period in the app
4. Submit your results.

Remember, whenever you are heading into the bush, for a citizen science project or for leisure, wear appropriate clothing and shoes, take plenty of water and let someone know where you are going.

