

Wildlife Fact Sheet

"If all the insects on earth disappeared, within 50 years all life on earth would disappear. If all humans disappeared within 50 years all species would flourish as never before." - Jonas Sulk, discoverer of the Polio Vaccine.



Wild about wildlife

* **When we talk about wildlife** we're talking about all of the mammals, birds, fishes, amphibians, reptiles, insects, crustaceans, sponges, jellyfish and bacteria: we're talking about all the walking, flying, hopping, swimming, slithering and squirming creatures that make up the wonderful mix of creatures that we share our planet with.

* **Wildlife is a fundamental part of biodiversity:** without wildlife plants wouldn't grow; there would be no food; waste matter wouldn't break down; we would have no air to breathe; and life would be very grim indeed.

* **So you would think that we would be taking great care of our wildlife, wouldn't you?** Yet Australia has one of the the worst extinction rates in the world. For example, almost 40% of mammal extinctions globally in the last 200 years have occurred in Australia. (1)

* **This truly is a disaster** when you consider that 45% of our birds, 83% of our mammals, 89% of our reptiles, 90% of our fish and insects and 93% of our amphibians are found nowhere else on Earth.

* The truth is that **our wildlife is in serious strife:** habitats are being destroyed, water and food sources are being lost, and the very systems that our wildlife depends upon for life are being damaged - all due to human activities.



For more information on how you can help our environment, or to make some suggestions of your own, please go to www.coolaustralia.org



coolaustralia.org

Wildlife Fact Sheet

Did you know?

* **As of 2008 almost ¼ of the world's mammals** were threatened or extinct. (2)

* **There are only about 1000 rare red-tailed black cockatoo's left in the wild.** Overseas collectors will pay up to A\$50,000 on the black market for one breeding pair. (3)

* **On average, sharks kill 10 humans every year.** Approximately 100 people die each year when they are stepped on by cows. (4)

* **The total number of described species** in the world is estimated to be close to 1,900,000. (5)

* For sheer variety and abundance, **insects rank among the most successful animals on Earth**, with about one million species of insects have been identified so far. (6)

* **The blue whale is the largest animal in the world**, growing up to 33 metres in length and weighing up to 181 tonnes. (7)

* **Parrots are smart!** They can solve certain linguistic tasks as children aged 4 to 6, understanding concepts like "same" and "different", "bigger" and "smaller", "none" and numbers. (8)

* **With an estimated population of only 30 to 40 animals in the wild**, the critically endangered Gilbert's potoroo is Australia's rarest mammal. (9)

* **Hummingbirds** are the only birds that can hover, fly backwards and even fly upside down. (10)

* **The last Tasmanian tiger in captivity died in 1936.** There have been reported sightings since, but none have ever been caught. (11)

* **Criminals steal an estimated 38 million animals from Brazil's forests each year.** They earn around US\$1 billion per year from their exploits. (12)

* **All clownfish are born male.** They have the ability to switch their sex, but will do so only to become the dominant female of a group. The change is irreversible. (13)



Visit www.coolaustralia.org for more information and facts about wildlife.

For more information on how you can help our environment, or to make some suggestions of your own, please go to www.coolaustralia.org



coolaustralia.org

Wildlife Fact Sheet

What can you do?

* **Keep storm-water clean.** Oil, antifreeze, fertilizers, paint and other chemicals find their way into the waterways - especially if you pour them down the storm-water drain or sink!

* **Don't litter.** You're a dope if you rubbish Australia.

* **Keep your cats locked up!** Do not release them into the wild and make sure your cat is de-sexed, wearing a bell and inside at night.

* **Drive carefully on country roads** if only for selfish reasons. Have you ever seen what a kangaroo or wombat can do to your car's front grille?

* **Donate your time.** Volunteer with a local group to help re-vegetate your area and provide important habitats for your local wildlife. Planting trees is very satisfying, if a little tough on the inner thighs and lower back.

* **Avoid garden sprays.** Pesticides kills bugs AND native birds and frogs. Go for natural pest control in your veggie garden (see our *Fact Sheet: Control Garden Pests the Green Way*).

* **Cockroaches? Gross.** Plug all small cracks along skirting boards, wall shelves and cupboards, and around pipes, sinks and bathroom fixtures. A light dusting of borax around your refrigerator, stove and duct work is an helps keep the roaches out of favourite hiding places. Replace the borax if it gets wet as it's no longer as effective.

* **How to avoid flies in the kitchen while keeping food free from fly spray?** Sunny windows are flies' most common points of entry into your home, so close windows before the sun hits them. Use sticky flypaper to catch unwelcome visitors. You can make your own with honey and yellow paper.

* **Mice and rats.** Surely they belong outside, in a land far, far away. So why are they in your kitchen? Because there's lots of tasty stuff to eat. How to avoid them? Keep storage areas clean and tidy and seal holes in walls. The RSPCA advises that old-fashioned snap traps are a humane way to kill mice or rats because death is likely to be instant; just always make sure the trap is placed so it will not be triggered by a child or pet.

* **Buy sustainable seafood.** Avoid long-living endangered species like Flake and Orange Roughy. Check the Australian Marine Conservation Society's 'Sustainable seafood guide' before you buy.

* **Fish fairly.** Only catch what you can eat and release the rest. The idea of 'filling up the freezer' went out with Stubbies shorts, Crest Lager and terry towelling sun hats with the tiny brim.



Wildlife Fact Sheet

References:

1. World Wide Fund for Nature, 2008, *Australia's threatened species face extinction due to climate change*, <http://www.wwf.org.au/news/species-face-extinction-due-to-climate-change/>
2. G Magazine, 2010, *By the numbers*, July/August 2010.
- 3,4,8,12,13. Ha, Tanya, 2009, *Green Stuff for Kids*, Melbourne University Press, Victoria, Australia.
5. Australian Government Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, 2009, *Numbers of Living Species in Australia and the World*, <http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/abrs/publications/other/species-numbers/2009/index.html>
6. Australian Government Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, 2009, *Numbers of Living Species in Australia and the World*, <http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/abrs/publications/other/species-numbers/2009/03-exec-summary.html#invertebrates>
7. National Geographic, 2010, *Blue Whale*, <http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/blue-whale.html>
9. ABC Online, 2006, *Parrots 'as intelligent' as young children*, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200607/s1693309.htm>
10. G Magazine, 2010, *By the numbers*, July/August 2010.
11. PBS, 2010, *Hummingbirds: Magic in the air*, <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/episodes/hummingbirds-magic-in-the-air/introduction/5424/>
14. National Geographic, 2010, *Clown Anemonefish*, <http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/fish/clown-anemonefish.html>



Visit www.coolaustralia.org for more information and facts about wildlife.

For more information on how you can help our environment, or to make some suggestions of your own, please go to www.coolaustralia.org



[coolaustralia.org](http://www.coolaustralia.org)