CSIRO National Science Experiment: Wild Watch Guide

What is CSIRO?

CSIRO (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation) is Australia's national science agency

- We solve the greatest challenges through innovative science and technology
- CSIRO Education and Outreach puts cutting-edge science into the hands of young Australians to build the strong and diverse STEM-capable workforce Australia needs
- Our education programs and initiatives reach more than 110,000 teachers and young Australians each year

What is CSIRO's National Research Collections Australia?

The CSIRO National Research Collections Australia aim is to build a complete picture of Australia's biodiversity by cataloguing what species exist, where they live, and how they connect with their ecosystems. This scientific knowledge isn't just for the sake of curiosity; it's the foundation for effective environmental management. For instance, if a bushfire sweeps through a region, knowing what species originally lived there is vital for restoration. You can't bring back an ecosystem if you don't know what used to be part of it. By documenting flora and fauna across time and geography, CSIRO provides the data needed to guide recovery efforts, ensure native species are replanted, and preserve Australia's unique ecological heritage. CSIRO's National Research Collections Australia is home to over 15 million natural history specimens, making it one of the most important infrastructures in Australia. These collections include plants, insects, fish, wildlife, algae, and tree seeds, and they support research, conservation, and sustainable management of Australia's unique ecosystems. Housed in locations including Canberra, Hobart, and Cairns, the collections are being digitised to enhance accessibility and scientific discovery.

A young scientist explores nature with curiosity, using a magnifying glass to study plants up close. © CSIRO

What is the CSIRO's National Science Experiment: CSIRO Wild Watch?

During National Science Week, CSIRO will launch its inaugural National Science Experiment: CSIRO Wild Watch. CSIRO is inviting all Australians to take part in a large-scale citizen science initiative. We're encouraging families, schools, and community groups to head outdoors, observe local flora and fauna, and contribute valuable biodiversity data to support Australian research. CSIRO Wild Watch is a hands-on way for young people and the young at heart to connect with nature, become citizen scientists, and play an active role in understanding and protecting Australia's unique environment. CSIRO Wild Watch will support CSIRO's National Research Collections Australia biodiversity researchers by undertaking citizen science that contributes to the study of Australia's unique biodiversity. Observe and record your local flora and fauna and contribute valuable data to support CSIRO science through iNaturalist… download the app today! Information and resources are available to help you participate in CSIRO Wild Watch. So, grab your device and join CSIRO Wild Watch—where every discovery counts!

How to run CSIRO Wild Watch?

1. Teachers, community group leaders and parents register at CSIRO.au/WildWatch
2. Set-up an iNaturalist account for your class or group and add the CSIRO Wild Watch project (see iNaturalist teacher guide)
3. The CSIRO Wild Watch project does not begin until National Science Week (9-17 Aug) and any observations taken before or after National Science Week will not be included in the CSIRO National Science Experiment
4. Share the CSIRO National Science Experiment: CSIRO Wild Watch guide PPT presentation and Wild Files PPT presentation with young people to give them a brief overview of the CSIRO National Science Experiment: CSIRO Wild Watch and Wild Files and supporting activities
5. Choose a desired location to conduct the CSIRO Wild Watch
6. Students will take photos and share them with their teacher, group leader, or parent
7. Students should be encouraged to capture photos of wild living things versus captive or cultivated living things (e.g. the school grounds may be a captive habitat, yet wild living things pop in from time to time like a weed or insect or bird)
8. It is advised to provide a mini lesson on how best to take a photo of wild living things which is different from taking a photo of person or a sunset
9. A small number of quality observations that include multiple detailed images are much more useful to the iNaturalist community than a high number of low-quality single image observations
10. Photo uploading **must** be done by an adult - a teacher, parent, or group leader and can be done daily, as a single batch at the end of National Science week, or as fits your schedule
11. All iNaturalist interactions must be completed by an adult