



THE HON TANYA PLIBERSEK MP

Minister for the Environment and Water

MEDIA RELEASE

Bush Blitz: working together to help restore Australia's biodiversity

Scientists and Traditional Owners will work together to discover species new to science, helping restore Australia's biodiversity on the next Bush Blitz expedition to Wilinggin Country, West Kimberley on 18 to 29 July 2022.

Bush Blitz is Australia's leading species discovery program, and the largest biological survey of its type in the world.

Bush Blitz is a partnership between the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), Parks Australia, BHP, and Earthwatch Australia, to document Australia's plants and animals in order to protect and manage our biodiversity.

Bush Blitz undertakes expeditions on conservation areas with a particular focus on Indigenous lands and has discovered more than 1,800 new species of plants and animals in the last decade, adding thousands of new species records to what is already known.

The West Kimberley expedition involves 17 specialist taxonomists, Wilinggin rangers, Traditional Owners and five WA teachers for the Bush Blitz TeachLive project, highlighting the importance of biodiversity, research and the role of taxonomy in land management, education and citizen science.

It also builds the capacity of land managers and communities to protect and manage our natural environment, through a better understanding of the significant role biodiversity plays in healthy, sustainable ecosystems.

Quotes from the Minister for Environment and Water, Tanya Plibersek MP:

"Bush Blitz helps to fill the knowledge gaps in Australia's biodiversity.

"There is a real gap in our understanding of many of our native plants and animals. We can't protect our biodiversity if we don't know what's out there.

"There are an estimated 580,000-680,000 species in Australia, but up to three-quarters of this biodiversity is yet to be identified and scientifically described. Around forty-five per cent of continental Australia and over 90 per cent of our marine area have never been comprehensively surveyed by scientists. We're aiming to change that.

Quotes from Wilinggin Aboriginal Corporation Chairperson, Mr Arnold Sahanna:

"Wilinggin Traditional Owners and their Ranger teams are looking forward to the upcoming Bush Blitz engagement, which the Ngarinyin see as a continuation of Wilinggin's strategy of bringing non-Indigenous science into alignment with Ngarinyin Cultural Knowledge Systems.

A strategy and philosophy aimed at ensuring that our part of the Wanjin Cultural Estate is sustained for our future generations.

Quotes from Stephen White, Principal Rehabilitation and Biodiversity at BHP.

As well as protecting Australia’s biodiversity, the West Kimberley Bush Blitz expedition builds resilience in our landscapes by increasing the collection and sharing of scientific knowledge.

Quotes from Fiona Sutton Wilson, CEO Earthwatch Australia.

“Programs like Bush Blitz *TeachLive* bridge the divide between science and society in a time of great need for Australia’s environment.

“Opportunities to engage in citizen science empowers communities to look after nature, and Bush Blitz goes even further – empowering teachers to learn from scientists and Traditional Owners which in turn, builds their own capabilities in biodiversity and outdoor STEM learning.

“Children and young people join their teachers on this journey in real time, inspiring their peers, families and communities as environmental leaders and stewards of our natural world.”

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