

# Nature explorer JOURNAL

**Name:**

**Age:**

**Favourite local animal:**

**Favourite park:**



GLEN EIRA  
CITY COUNCIL



*Nature*



LEARN



EXPLORE



RECORD

**NEXT DOOR**

Bentleigh, Bentleigh East, Brighton East, Carnegie, Caulfield, Elsternwick,  
Gardenvale, Glen Huntly, McKinnon, Murrumbeena, Ormond, St Kilda East





**We need everyone's help to collect data on the insects, frogs and birds that call Glen Eira home. Get outside, connect with the natural world around you and have fun!**

Nature provides a fun and interesting place to play, be active and spend time with friends and family.

We are fortunate in Glen Eira to have many parks and reserves which have beautiful plants and trees. These provide different and important habitats for a whole range of animals. The types of animals that live in Glen Eira can be found on our *Biodiversity Map*. This will give you a good idea about which parks you could visit. Use this booklet for ideas about what to do in nature and where and how to look for different animals.

*Happy exploring!*



# Where to look

## Birds

Look in large trees, smaller plants and shrubs for birds. Some birds can be found searching for grass seeds or insects in open grassy areas. Carefully look around ponds and wetlands where you can spot different ducks, herons and other waterbirds.

## Mammals

All our native mammals are nocturnal (active at night), so you will need a spotlight and family or friends with you. You might see possums in trees around your house or running along powerlines around your neighbourhood at night. If you are lucky enough, you may see the rare grey-headed flying-fox flying over head or feeding from eucalyptus trees or fruit trees. These animals fly out from Yarra Bend Park, Kew every night to suburbs around Melbourne to find food — they love eating fruit.

## Insects

Insects are everywhere. Do you know we have an insect called the blue-banded bee in Glen Eira? These are different to honeybees — instead of a yellow and black behind, they are black and blue. These insects can be seen in spring and summer in gardens with lots of flowering plants, especially with purple coloured flowers.

We have a few different butterflies, wasps, beetles and dragon flies as well as flies — including hoverflies which fly like a helicopter. You may also find slaters, millipedes and beetles under logs or leaf litter. Please remember not to touch insects, especially butterflies as their wings and bodies are very fragile and bees and wasps can sting.



## Frogs

Frogs aren't the easiest animal to find in Glen Eira. You have to have a keen sense of hearing, as you will most likely hear frogs before you see them. What you are hearing is male frogs calling to the female frogs to start breeding. Each frog species has a unique call and this is how we identify them.

Frogs can be heard around the edges of ponds, wetlands and even in your garden if there are lots of cool, shady and moist areas where they can find shelter.



## Plants

You will find plants anywhere you go. These provide habitat for the animals in Glen Eira. We have old eucalyptus trees which provide food, hollows and nesting areas for birds, bats and insects and are therefore very important to keep.

## Reptiles

We unfortunately don't have many reptiles in Glen Eira. You may occasionally come across a marbled gecko hiding in your shed, or the common garden sun skink in places there are lots of leaves, logs and shelter on the ground.



# Finding and recording animals

When you start to explore your local environment, think about discovering what lives in your backyard first. Then you can start to explore your local park and even your school.

A keen use of your senses is a good way to start exploring and getting 'in tune' with nature. Answer these simple questions while in a natural area:

- What can you see? What can you hear? What can you smell? What can you touch?
- Now you are more aware of your surroundings, you will need to use a few different methods and tools to help you find and identify animals.

## Identification

Firstly, you can use a field guide to help you identify what you have found. There are many books available in the library and some identification charts in your backpack.

Download the *Museum Victorian Field Guide to Victorian Fauna* app.



To identify frogs, download the *Frog Census* app. It has the calls of the most common frogs in Melbourne. The best way to identify frogs is through their unique calls.



To identify birds, download the *Aussie Bird Count* app and look at the Field Guide module.



# Handy tips:

## **Birds:**

Listen and look: it is best to search in the early morning — use binoculars for a better look.

Five key tips for identifying birds:

1. **Size and shape:** what is the size and shape of the bird? What is the shape of its bill/beak? Is it short and rounded, long and skinny or sharp and pointy?
2. **Colour and markings:** what colour and markings does the bird have? Is it dull grey or brown, or is it very colourful with distinct markings on its face or chest?
3. **Behaviour and calling:** what is the bird doing, how is it behaving, is it foraging (looking for food), fluttering about, nesting, or calling? What does its call sound like — have you heard it before?
4. **Location:** is the bird in your suburb? Is it in Glen Eira or is it further away?
5. **Habitat:** where is the bird? Is it in a tree in a park, in a birdbath in your backyard, or an open grassy area?

Also be mindful of different colouration between male and female birds. Look at these superb fairy wrens. The blue bird on the left is the male, and the dull brown coloured bird on the right is the female. Female and male birds are different colours. The male must appear obvious and ‘showy’ to do the best job in attracting a mate.



## **Mammals:**

Watch, listen and spotlight at night. Use the *Museum Victorian Field Guide to Victorian Fauna* app and search for mammals in your area.



**POBBLEBONK**  
(*Limnodynastes dumerilii*)



**NEON CUCKOO BEE**  
(*Thyreus species*)



**HOVERFLY**  
(*Syrphidae family*)



**COMMON FROGLET**  
(*Crinia signifera*)



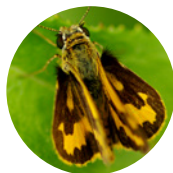
**BLUE-BANDED BEE**  
(*Amegilla species*)



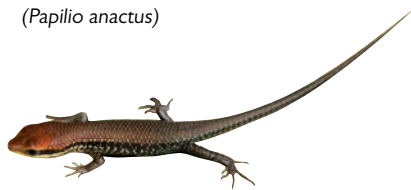
**DINGY SWALLOWTAIL**  
(*Papilio anactus*)



**SOUTHERN BROWN TREE FROG**  
(*Litoria ewingii*)



**SKIPPER BUTTERFLY**  
(*Hesperiidae family*)



**COMMON GARDEN SUNSKINK**  
(*Lampropholis guichenoti*)

## Frogs:

Listen to male frogs calling around ponds and wetlands by using a spotlight at night. Use the *Frog Census* app to learn calls to identify what you may be hearing.

## Reptiles:

Keep your eye out for basking skinks darting around the base of trees, in leaf litter and underneath rocks or logs. Use the *Museum Victorian Field Guide to Victorian Fauna* app to identify reptiles in your area.

## Insects:

Keep watch at flowers, wait for a few minutes for insects to visit the flowers — you will be amazed at what you can see when you are still, quiet and patient.



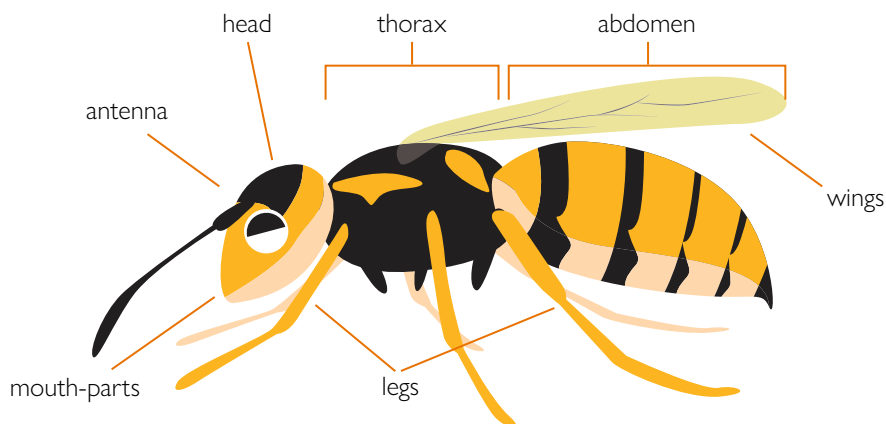
## Other bugs:

Search through leaf litter — gently shake some trees/bushes onto a white sheet or upside-down umbrella and use your magnify glass to see things close up.

Use the pollinator chart to identify insect pollinators, and the *Museum Victorian Field Guide* app to identify other insects and mini-beasts.

Five quick tips for identifying insects and other mini-beasts:

1. Insects have six legs, one or two pairs of wings, three body parts (head, thorax and abdomen) and an antenna. Examples of insects are bees, wasps, ants, moths/butterflies, flies, beetles, dragonflies and praying mantis.
2. Many insects can fly (but not all).
3. Insects have a range of colours, shapes, sizes and behaviours. Most are quite small, and they occur in all different types of habitats.
4. Insects consume food differently. Some beetles chew, flies slurp with a tube-like tongue and butterflies and bees have a straw-like tongue called a proboscis to sip nectar.
5. Other mini-beasts that are not insects are things like spiders (eight legs and two body parts); millipedes (many legs) and slaters/pill-bugs (seven pairs of legs).



Remember to be careful and always check with an adult first before touching bugs.  
**Keep your fingers where you can see them!**

# Recording:

We have provided you with some blank pages to record your observations and findings.

If you are confident in what you have found and want to be a citizen scientist to help our *Nature Next Door* Program, you can download the below apps, and with the help of your parents submit some of your recordings.

- You can record your discoveries for a week in October through the *Backyard Bird Count* app (see page four), or through the *BirdLife* app any time of the year.



- You can use the *Frog Census* app to record frog calls and send them to Melbourne Water to be analysed.



- For insects, you can download the *Clean Air Urban Landscape Hub* (CAUL) Urban Wildlife app and go to the 'Beneficial Insects' page.



- For insects, you can also download the *iNaturalist* app.



- If you feel like a fun and competitive approach to citizen science, then why not try *Questagame*. *Questagame* is the world's first mobile game that takes you outdoors to discover, map and ultimately help protect life on our planet. Your sightings contribute to real research and conservation.



Note down your findings and observations:

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# *What have you discovered?*

Circle which habitat types you can find in your neighbourhood.

- Flowering plants
- Grassy areas
- Bushland/forest/tree cover
- Leaves and logs on the ground
- Ponds/wetlands
- Open grass with a few trees

What other habitats do you have in your neighbourhood?

Can you draw a habitat here:



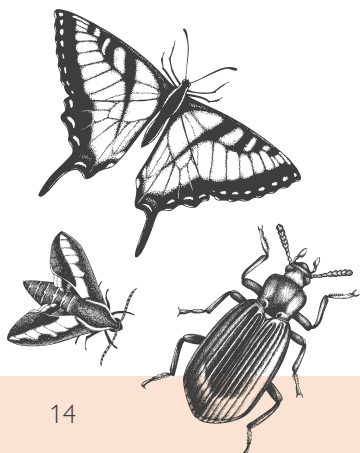
Which animals live in this habitat?

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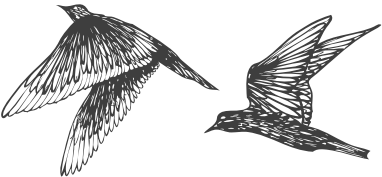
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Draw, sketch or take a photo of an insect found in your neighbourhood:





Draw, sketch or take a photo of a bird found in your neighbourhood:



Collect some materials from nature off the ground, like leaves, sticks, flowers.  
Create a nature portrait or picture:



# *Things to do in nature:*

- Make an insect hotel
- Climb a tree
- Play in the rain and jump in muddy puddles
- Plant something and watch it grow
- Make a mud pie
- Visit a national park
- Build a nature cubby
- Go camping
- Go on a bug hunt
- Stare at the stars
- Imagine animals in the clouds
- Collect colour swatches and then find these colours in nature
- Create a nature journal (Page 18)
- Go on a nature scavenger hunt (Page 24)



# Nature journaling:

Most, if not all scientists, keep a notebook about their observations.

Why is nature journaling so great?

- It helps you explore your world.
- It is your own special 'book of life'.
- It is something that is just yours — you don't have to share it with anyone.
- A nature journal can help you reflect on your time in the world and your relationship to nature. It helps to make us feel part of the interwoven, magical and often hidden stories that are all around us.

Your nature journal could include anything — art, poetry, scientific measurements, ideas, photography or inspirational quotes.

Nature journaling helps you develop skills in scientific observation, creative writing, questioning how things work, inventiveness, reflection and mindfulness, self-confidence and the ability to express yourself. Start with these simple activities. Go outside in your backyard or visit a local park.



## Activity one:

### 1. Ground observation (five minutes).

Draw or write something that you've found on the ground and label it. How did it get there? Does it live there? Will it move around again? What habitat is it in?

### 2. Eye level (five minutes).

Look at shrubs, low nests, insects, birds, leaves and tall plants.

Ask yourself — what is your subject doing? What is it a part of? If it is a leaf, what plant is it from?

### 3. Overhead (five minutes).

Look up and describe the colours you see. Do you see clouds or birds flying? Can you see the moon?

### 4. Write about how the area makes you feel.

What do you find interesting? What would you like to know more about? What are your favourite colours and shapes?

## Activity two:

Look at the plants, leaves and flowers around you. Choose one that interests you. Now pick some leaves or a branch and draw it. Look at the lines, the shape, the veins, the edges, and the leaves on the branch. Are they alternate or opposite, lobed, wiggly or straight? Describe it in detail.

If you are not used to drawing, try to not take your pencil off the paper. Just keep it on the paper and just draw. Then try it again with just quick glances at your paper, draw it from several angles in your book. Drawing nature is a great way to know it on a deeper level and be more sensitive to its shapes, patterns and details.

*The rest of what you put in your journal is up to you!* ● .....











# Nature scavenger hunt:

If you are over eight years old, set your self a challenge and time yourself — how quick can you find these things?



☐ A green leaf



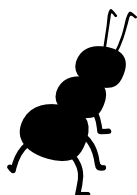
☐ Sand or dirt



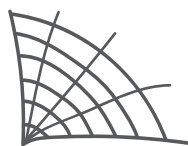
☐ A brown leaf



☐ Butterfly



☐ An ant



☐ Spiders web



☐ Tree bark



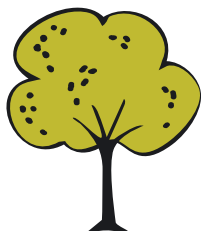
☐ Grass



☐ A colourful bird



☐ Flower



☐ A large tree



☐ Rocks

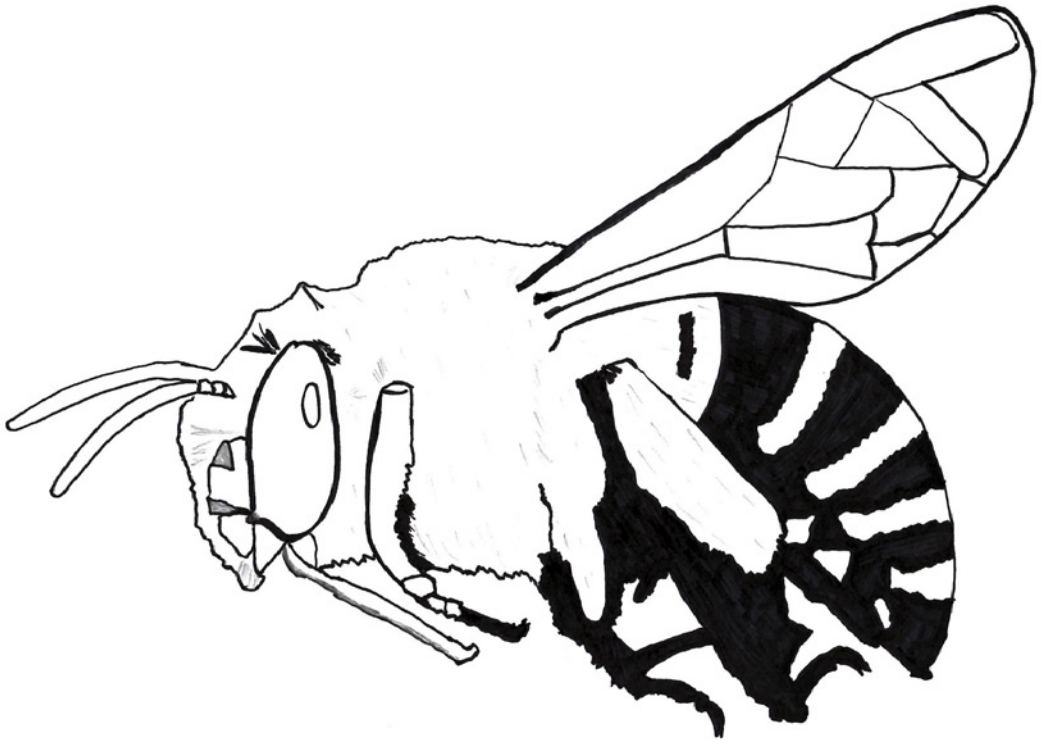


☐ Water



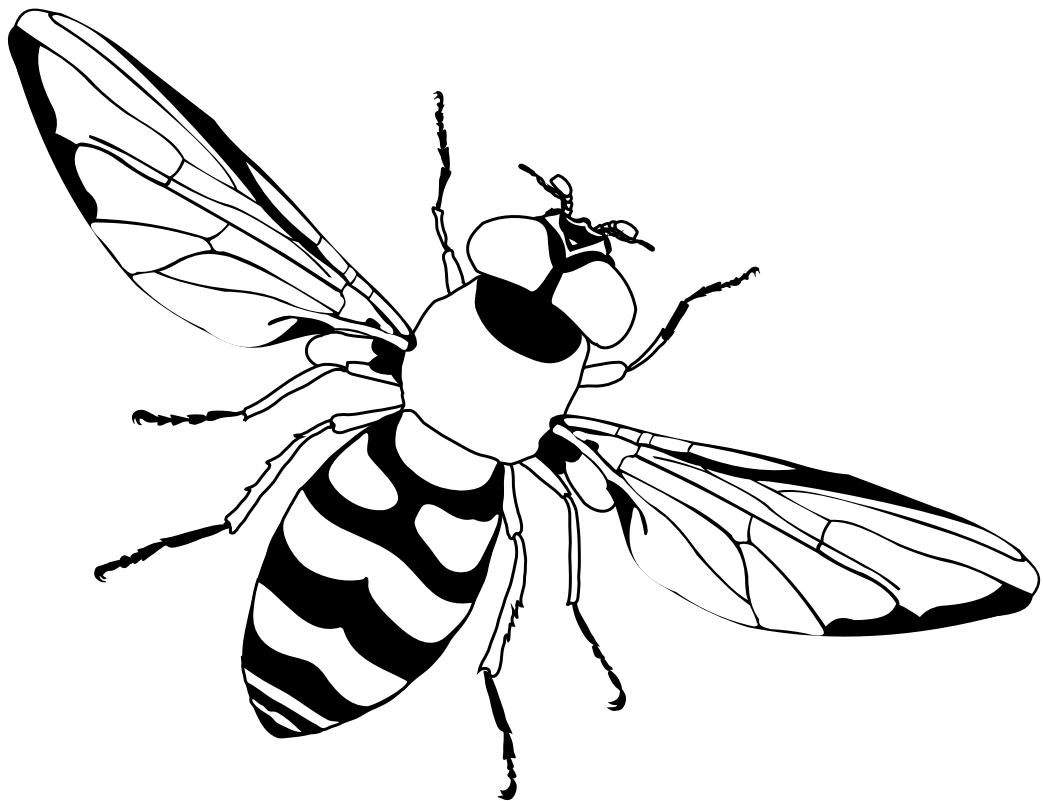
☐ Cloud

*Colour in:*



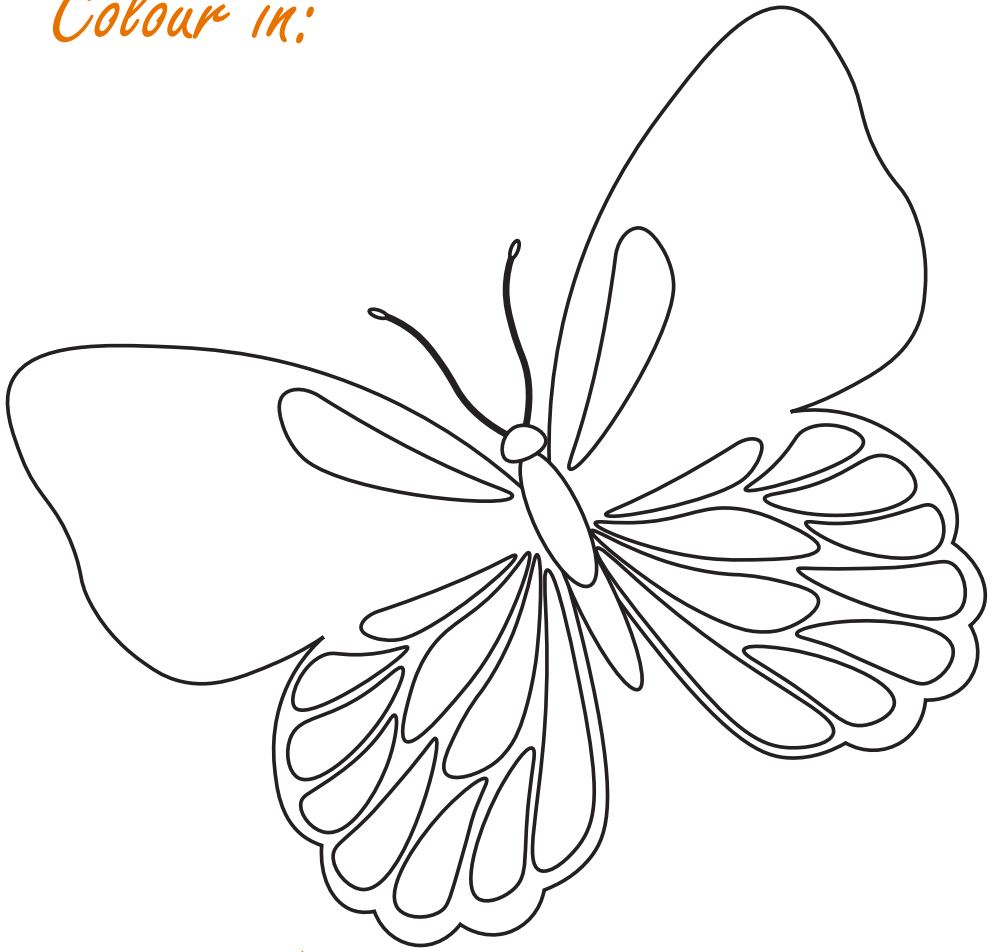
**Blue banded bee**

*Colour in:*



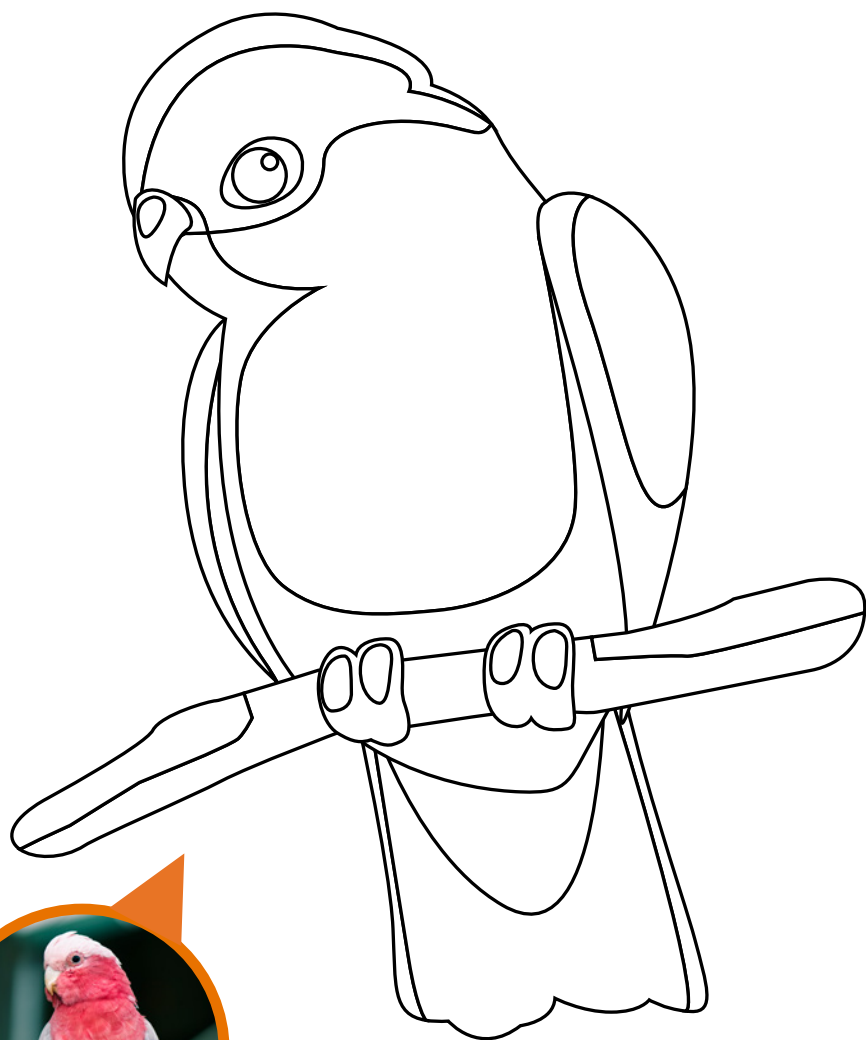
**Hover fly**

*Colour in:*



**Dingy swallowtail  
butterfly**

*Colour in:*



**Galah**







**Melbourne  
Water**

Enhancing Life and Liveability

**#frogcensus**

## *Simple steps:*

Some simple steps you and your family can take to help protect nature:

- Never take plants or animals out of their habitat — have a look and then always gently put them back.
- Refuse, reduce, reuse, recycle.
- Always take your rubbish home after your nature exploration.
- Save water and turn off lights when not in use at home.
- Eat less meat.
- Drive the car less and walk, cycle or catch public transport.
- Reduce pesticide and insecticide use in the garden.
- Plant a tree or create a veggie garden/herb pot at home.
- Plant indigenous plants in your garden.
- Put a bird bath or bowl of water out for wildlife, especially in summer.
- Become a citizen scientist and submit a record of an animal or plant that you have found. See: [www.ala.org.au](http://www.ala.org.au)



# Glossary:

- **Biodiversity:** all the living things on the planet, including plants, animals, humans, trees, fungi, bacteria and all their connections and relationships to each other.
- **Habitat:** the natural home or environment of an animal or plant.
- **Native:** a plant or animal which originated in Australia.
- **Nature:** any natural area with grass, plants, people and/or animals. It can be in our backyards, along the street, in local parks and in large reserve systems like national parks.
- **Nocturnal:** animals that are active at night.
- **Pollinate:** pollination is the act of transferring pollen from one flower to another so the plant can produce seeds for a new plant to grow.
- **Species:** species is a way of classifying living things. It refers to living things that have the same physical appearance, habitat preferences and can reproduce to create offspring (babies).



