

Lesson Plan: Backyard Biodiversity- discover your local icons

Sustainability Through Your Own Lens- school photography competition

ResourceSmart Schools

The Sustainability Through Your Own Lens Photography Competition is a great opportunity for students to explore and celebrate Victoria's biodiversity.

Every Victorian region is home to unique plants, animals and habitats. This year's competition encourages students to discover and photograph the species and ecosystems that make their local area special, from wildlife in their backyards and school grounds to threatened species and important habitats in nearby reserves and waterways.

Suitable for students of all year levels, this activity can be completed as a classroom lesson, by a Student Action Team, or as a whole-school biodiversity project. It is also an engaging end-of-Term 3 activity during Biodiversity Month.

Lesson Plan Overview

Students will:

- Investigate local biodiversity and the species and habitats that are important in their region.
- Learn about iconic and threatened species in Victoria.
- Reflect on why biodiversity matters and how it can be protected.
- Use photography and storytelling to communicate the value of nature.

Step 1. Explore images of icon species: 45 minutes

Step 2. Sharing classroom reflections: 20 minutes

Step 3. Prepare to enter the competition: 20 minutes

Step 1: Explore images of icon species

Slide deck available to download. You are welcome to find alternative photos

Have students reflect individually or in groups on each image using the following questions:

1. What do you notice about this species or habitat?
2. Where do you think this species or habitat is found, and why might it be considered iconic?
3. What does this species or habitat need to survive or thrive?
4. What challenges or threats might this species or habitat face?
5. What can people do to help protect it?

Image name	Example answers	
1. What do you notice about this species or habitat?	• <i>It has bright colours that help it stand out.</i> • <i>There are lots of different plants growing in this habitat.</i> • <i>The habitat looks healthy because there is plenty of shelter and water.</i> • <i>This species appears to be well adapted to its environment.</i> • <i>I can see signs that many animals use this habitat.</i>	
2. Where do you think this species or habitat is found, and why might it be considered iconic?	• <i>Found in forests where trees provide food and shelter.</i> • <i>Found near rivers or wetlands with reliable water.</i> • <i>Helps pollinate plants or spread seeds.</i> • <i>Supports threatened species.</i> • <i>A well-known and valued local species.</i> • <i>Connects habitats so wildlife can move safely.</i> • <i>Important to Traditional Owners and local communities.</i>	
3. What does this species or habitat need to survive or thrive?	• <i>Food and water</i> • <i>Shelter and nesting places</i> • <i>Healthy soil</i> • <i>Native plants</i> • <i>Clean rivers and wetlands</i> • <i>Connected habitats</i> • <i>Protection from pests and pollution</i>	
4. What challenges or threats might this species or habitat face?	• <i>Loss of habitat due to development.</i> • <i>Pollution in waterways.</i> • <i>Extreme weather such as drought, floods or bushfires.</i> • <i>Introduced pests like foxes, cats or weeds.</i> • <i>People disturbing nesting or feeding areas.</i> • <i>Lack of food, water or shelter.</i>	
5. What can people do to help protect it?	• <i>Plant native species in gardens and school grounds.</i> • <i>Keep waterways and natural areas free from litter.</i> • <i>Protect and restore habitat.</i> • <i>Control invasive weeds and pests.</i> • <i>Learn more about local wildlife and share that knowledge with others.</i> • <i>Participate in local conservation or biodiversity projects.</i>	

Step 2: Sharing reflections

After students have explored the images, discuss their observations and reflections.

- Which species or habitat stood out to you and why?
- Why are some species considered threatened?

- What makes a species or habitat iconic to your region?
- Why is biodiversity important for healthy ecosystems?
- How can schools, families and communities help protect local biodiversity?
- What species, habitat or biodiversity story could you photograph for the competition?

Step 3: Prepare Students for the Competition

Planning the photo

Ask students to consider the following when planning their photograph:

- What local species, habitat or biodiversity activity would you like to photograph?
- What story about nature does your photograph tell?
- Why is this species or habitat important?
- How can your photograph encourage others to care about local biodiversity?
- Where and when would be the best time to take your photograph?

After the photo is taken

Reflect on the image:

- What is your photograph showing?
- Why did you choose this subject?
- Is the species, habitat or activity significant/iconic to your local area?
- What conservation message does the photograph communicate?
- What can people learn from your image?
- What is happening beyond the frame of the photograph?

Competition Reflection

Ask students to answer the competition prompt in a maximum of 100 words: *‘What species, habitat or place in nature do you think deserves greater recognition and protection and why?’*