



[Biodiversity is Life – Biodiversity is Our Life](#)

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2010 has been declared International Year of Biodiversity by the United Nations. It is a celebration of life and of the value of biodiversity for our lives. The goal of this UN initiative is to increase public awareness of biodiversity and to encourage people to protect it. *But what does biodiversity mean and why should you care?*

Definition of Biodiversity

Biodiversity was defined by the UN Earth Summit in 1992 as *"the variability among living organisms from all sources, including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine, and other aquatic ecosystems, and the ecological complexes of which they are part: this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems"*.

We (humans) are an integral part of biodiversity. And so are the wide range of animal and plants living around us. As such our destinies are tightly linked together. What differentiates us (from animals) is the power that we have to protect or destroy biodiversity.

Biodiversity is vital for our current and future wellbeing and we need to do everything in our power to protect it. This year, as International Year of Biodiversity, is your opportunity to help increase awareness of the role that biodiversity plays in sustaining life on Earth so that people take action to become more environmentally friendly and protect the living world surrounding us.

Welcome to the International Year of Biodiversity

The International Year of Biodiversity was launched at an opening ceremony that took place in Berlin on Monday 11 January 2010.



[UN Secretary General Welcome Message for the 2010 International Year of Biodiversity](#) from [CBD](#) on [Vimeo](#).

The Benefits of Biodiversity are *Ecological* and *Economic*.

According to [Urban Ecology Australia](#), from an **ecological** point of view, “a more diverse ecosystem is better able to withstand environmental stress and consequently is more productive. The loss of a species is thus likely to decrease the ability of the system to maintain itself or to recover from damage or disturbance. Just like a species with high genetic diversity, an ecosystem with high biodiversity may have a greater chance of adapting to environmental change. In other words, the more species comprising an ecosystem, the more stable the ecosystem is likely to be.”*

From an **economic** point of view, biodiversity provides us commodities such as crops, livestock, fish, fruits and vegetables, even wild plants used for medicinal purposes. Biodiversity allows fibers for clothing, wood for shelter and warmth, as well as a wide range of products derived from plants like oils, lubricants, perfumes, fragrances, dyes, paper, waxes, rubber, latexes, resins, poisons, and cork, and from animals like wool, silk, leather, lubricants, and waxes. Tourism and recreational activities also often are derived from biodiversity as nature and animals are an attraction enjoyed by many people.

Biodiversity and climate change

The Assessment of Australia’s Terrestrial Biodiversity 2008 reported that “*many of Australia’s biological assets are still in decline, and threats are ongoing and compounded by climate change.*”



[Biodiversity and Climate Change](#) from [CBD](#) on [Vimeo](#).

The Australia State of the Environment 2006 Report has found that:

* *“monitoring in the Great Barrier Reef and in Ningaloo Reef shows considerable local damage and changes in resident species from cyclones, bleaching, fishing, sedimentation and pollution”,*

* *“major seagrass losses have been documented in Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia”,*

* *“a steady increase in the number of species considered to be overfished”,*

* *“many of the pressures from human activity, such as increasing consumption, that were reported in the 2001 State of the Environment Report still exist, and some have intensified”.*

The next report is due in 2011 and I can't help but wonder: “How much worse is it going to get?”

Biodiversity and Australia

Australia is one of the most diverse and most unique countries on the planet. According to the Australian Government, it is home to more than one million species of plants and animals, many of which are found nowhere else in the world.

Celebrating biodiversity should be instinctive in Australia. And yet, while preparing this article I found that many countries across the world have organised celebrations for the International Year of Biodiversity and that many organisations around the world have become partners of this special celebration, but **no Australian celebration has been registered, nor any Australian partner listed.**

Australia, it is now time to make a difference! Our country and the amazing well being that Australian biodiversity offers is invaluable. We need to come together to protect it.

Check the International Year of Biodiversity celebration map at <http://www.cbd.int/2010/celebrations/> and if you are a business become a partner of the International Year of Biodiversity at <http://www.cbd.int/2010/partner/>

Links:

1. International Year of Biodiversity: www.cbd.int/2010/

2. Urban Ecology Australia: www.urbanecology.org.au

3. Australian Government, Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts: www.environment.org.au/biodiversity/

4. Assessment of Australia's Terrestrial Biodiversity 2008, Report prepared by the Biodiversity Assessment Working Group of the National Land and Water Resources Audit for the Australian Government, Canberra:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/publications/terrestrial-assessment/pubs/terrestrial-assessment.pdf>, Independent report to the Australian Government Minister for the Environment and Heritage:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/soe/2006/publications/report/coasts-1.html>