

# Biodiversity and wildlife – what's the difference?

## What is wildlife?

When we talk about wildlife, we're talking about mammals, birds, fishes, frogs, lizards and snakes, flies and beetles, crabs and lobsters, sponges and jellyfish, and all the little bacteria and microbes that are too small to see.

When we talk about wildlife, we're talking about all the walking, flying, hopping, swimming, slithering and squirming creatures that make up the wonderful mix of creatures that we share our planet with.

Could we even survive with only humans on our planet?

All of the wildlife on our planet needs plants and other wildlife to survive. They depend on each other for food and habitats. We can call this mix of wildlife and plants 'biodiversity'.

## What is biodiversity?

Biodiversity is the spice of life. It is the variety of plants, animals, insects and micro-organisms on Earth. It is all their genes too, and the web of ecosystems that they make up. Can you begin to imagine if we had only human companions on our planet?

We can think of biodiversity on three levels:

- genetic diversity
- species diversity
- ecosystem diversity.

In Australia, we have around 700,000 species. Eight out of ten of our plants and mammals and almost half our birds are found only in Australia. We are blessed with an incredible range of ecosystems, from wildflowers in the west, red sand deserts in the centre, tropical rainforests in the north and snow-capped mountains in the south.

**'If all the insects on earth disappeared, within 50 years, all life on earth would disappear. If all humans disappeared within 50 years, all species would flourish as never before.'** – Jonas Salk, discoverer of the Polio vaccine.

