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New ClimateWatch trail at the Australian National Botanic Gardens

An exciting program allowing visitors to become ‘citizen scientists’ and monitor the effects of climate change on Australian native plants was today launched by the Australian National Botanic Gardens.

Developed in partnership with Earthwatch Australia, the ClimateWatch trail – located along the Gardens’ main path - allows visitors to take an active role in observing, monitoring and responding to the impacts of climate change.

“ClimateWatch empowers every Australian to become a citizen scientist by collecting and recording information about the natural world around them,” Andy Donnelly, the Acting Chief Executive Officer of Earthwatch Australia said. “This information will assist scientists and help shape the country’s scientific response to climate change.”

Gardens’ General Manager Peter Byron said he hoped the trail would inspire a new generation of young scientists.

“Visitors will be recording information such as flowering times and nesting patterns,” Mr Byron said.

“In a very practical way, they’ll be learning about the science of phenology – the study of periodic plant and animal life cycle events and how these are influenced by variations in climate.

“They’ll also be contributing valuable data to the national research effort to protect our native plants and animals.”

The ClimateWatch trail has been funded by the Friends of the Australian National Botanic Gardens, who are also supporting the initiative with volunteers to record observations and to help visitors to monitor flora and fauna.

“ClimateWatch provides community members such as schools with a focus for developing their understanding of climate change and natural processes. At the same time, scientists gain access to a suite of data collected in an efficient and cost-effective manner,” Mr Donnelly said.

The Australian National Botanic Gardens ClimateWatch Trail was launched in conjunction with International Day for Biological Diversity. Held on 22 May each year, International Day for Biological Diversity aims to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues around the world.

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