

# Brother volunteers become "Scientists for a Day"™

Brother has had a partnership with Earthwatch as part of its ongoing commitment to environmental conservation and sustainable resource management

(Left to right - Dr Andrew Hamer (Australian Research Centre for Urban Ecology), Ian Stewart (Brother International), Chris Gillies (Earthwatch Australia), Danielle Stokeld (University of Melbourne), Ryan Hughes (Phil Hughes Office Solutions), Caroline Peirce (Brother International), Alex Rodriguez (Brother International), Peter Norris (Brother International), notch on turtles shell is recorded for future reference.)

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- Since 2008, Brother has had a partnership with Earthwatch as part of its ongoing commitment to environmental conservation and sustainable resource management. In addition to direct support for scientific research, over the past three years over 75 brother employees and customers have participated in the Scientist for a Day program. As Citizen Scientists, they volunteer their time to be actively involved in conservation projects by providing hands-on assistance to researchers in the field. Recently, the focus of the program turned to capturing and assessing the freshwater turtle population in the Melbourne area. Throughout the world, populations of freshwater turtles are decreasing through habitat loss, fragmentation, isolation and over-exploitation by humans. However, very little is actually known about the freshwater turtles in Melbourne and the impact that urban expansion is having on their communities and the ecosystem they rely on to survive. The aim of this Scientist for a Day expedition was to examine the demography of the freshwater turtle populations in the Melbourne region and attempt to gain an understanding of the impact of urbanisation on the turtle habitat. During November, a team of eight volunteers waded through Melbournes surrounding freshwater lakes and creeks, seeking out as many turtles as possible. Each turtle was given a thorough health examination, weighed and measured. They also checked for evidence of previous capture and catalogued the sex of each turtle they found. A small notch was made in each turtles shell and coded for future capture reference then released back into the same habitat, at the same point of capture. The team consisted of four Brother staff, one customer, two University of Melbourne scientists and an Earthwatch research officer split into two groups of four. They started their adventure bright and early at 7am with a briefing where they were assigned their

search areas for the day. Equipped with nets and plenty of waterproof clothing, they arrived at their various destinations in Melbourne's eastern suburbs and set up to capture turtles residing in the lake. Samples were taken of the water chemistry and vegetation structure to analyse pH levels, salinity and temperature. Once the various nets were in place, they moved to their second location and repeated the process. When they returned later in the day to check their nets, they discovered a total of ten eels, which were immediately released, and six long neck turtles. At the end of the day, happy with their finds, they removed their nets and headed home.

In addition to the help contributing to environmental research, the volunteers also find their time as Citizen Scientists to be highly rewarding and enjoyable. Ryan Hughes from Phil Hughes Office Solutions joined the expedition as a Brother customer and has a background and passion for zoology. It was a fantastic day, he said, a great way to get an insight into the life of turtles in the urban environment, a way to observe the pressures and obstacles that human development has placed in their way. I actually left with a smile on my face remembering the reason I studied zoology in the first place. I really do miss it and have resolved to participate in further Earthwatch initiatives in my own time.

Peter Norris, Account Manager, Brother International Australia commented that his time spent with the team highlighted how a lot of day to day things, that many take for granted, impact and affect urban wildlife. He said it was a great team building opportunity that I am sure that we will remember with great fondness in the future.

Alex Rodriguez, Marketing Manager CSR and Communications Support, Brother International Australia has lived in urban areas with marsh wetlands and ponds most of his life but said that his participation in the program

made him realize just how many living creatures called those ponds home.

I learnt so many interesting things about the world we share with so many other living creatures, he commented, Having personally seen and interacted with some of the wildlife, I have a greater respect and understanding of wild life habitats.

As part of their continuing partnership with Earthwatch, Brother also invites the general public to get involved via its free click donation site [www.BrotherEarth.com](http://www.BrotherEarth.com). By clicking on a button on the website, Brother will donate funds to help specific environmental programs around the world. It doesn't cost the public anything but the time it takes to click and for every click made to Australia/Earthwatch button further work can be achieved in studying the Australian Marine Ecosystem.

Media

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Gap Marketing and Management Website: [www.gapmarketing.com.au](http://www.gapmarketing.com.au)

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