

*Ferox australis*  
Strategic Plan &  
Annual Review  
2023-24



## Strategic Plan 2023-24

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## Executive Summary

*Ferox australis*, Latin for Wild of the South, is an Australian based not-for-profit organisation aimed at engaging citizens in science globally.

The ethos of our organisation is to increase public environmental education through the use of citizen science-related tools and initiatives.

The objectives of our organisation are to:

- Host, promote, and collaborate in ecologically focused events to engage local, national and international communities in citizen science activities.
- Work collaboratively with governments, council, and other environmentally focused groups in engaging the public in citizen science.
- Deliver environmentally-focused citizen science educational programs and workshops to the public.
- Connect individuals and communities in citizen science-related discussions and initiatives.
- Facilitate the collection, research, analysis and dissemination of scientific data with the public for environmentally focused projects.
- Promote discussion, awareness, and participation in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals related to biodiversity.

In the 2021-22 financial year *Ferox australis* commenced as an entity. The organisation was established to act as an entity to administer the Great Southern Bioblitz and explore opportunities to conduct community engagement activities within South Australia and beyond. In recognition of this as an organisation *Ferox australis* strives to work across language and cultural contexts across the southern hemisphere. *Ferox australis* recognises different cultural contexts that our events support and strive to provide equal opportunity of participation regardless of background. *Ferox australis* respects the significant role indigenous communities play as custodians of the world's biodiversity, and respect leaders past and present.

In the first two years of operations, the organisation successfully obtained several community grants and ran community engagement activities.

Originally, *Ferox australis* was formed to provide a legal structure to assist in running the global initiative Great Southern BioBlitz (GSB) since 2019, engaging 26 countries and recording over 200k observations in the citizen science platform iNaturalist, in the last edition. Besides the GSB, we have promoted local events in South Australia, such as the Moth Nights and Biodiversity Treasure Hunts, and supported local engagement in the City Nature Challenge in



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Victoria and Queensland. Also, we have run training and workshops in citizen science bioblitz and iNaturalist.

Currently, we are expanding our focus from community engagement and citizen science practice to research. We were awarded the 2022 ACSA Seed Grant to cover publishing costs in the Citizen Science Theory and Practice Journal. We are now exploring the outcomes from the past four years of engagement in the GSB.

Looking forward, the organisation has several opportunities to build on previous success. To keep the local engagement in South Australia, as well as support engagement in other states, we envision recruiting new members to overcome limited physical presence in South Australia and starting new collaborations.

## Review of activities

### Community Engagement activities

#### Great Southern Bioblitz

In 2022 *Ferox australis* co-ordinated the third edition of *Great Southern BioBlitz* (GSB) with over 200,000 observations recorded throughout the southern hemisphere. We also collaborated with the Seaslug Census for the second year, to run the side project, Seaslug Sunday.

Comparing our engagement between the first to the third edition

- The number of observations increased 134% from 2020 and 10% from 2021.
- Species: We registered 90% more species in 2022 than in 2020, and 5% more than in 2021.
- Observers: We observed an increase of 90% compared to 2020 and a decrease of 5% to 2021.
- Countries: We engaged 134% more countries than in 2020 and 37% more than in 2021.
- Local projects: There was an increase of 60% compared to 2020 and a decrease of 7% to 2021.
- We engaged new countries, new local areas, and remote areas.



There is further opportunity to expand this event however, increasing the network of organisers and increasing communication is required.

### Moth night events



Since 2021, *Ferox australis* has been running ‘Moth nights’ in collaboration with The Bee Hub at Brownhill Creek.

The model was refined to include

- Ticketed event with a charge of around \$30
- A meal served typically cold, with a bar service available
- Two talks on some aspect of citizen science
- Several Moth sheets erected and participants introduced to iNaturalist.

In 2022-23 we hosted two Moth Night events, one during the [GSB](#) and one during the [Wombat Forest Care Community Event](#).

### St Peters Billabong Walk

*Ferox australis* has received funding from the City of Norwood, Payneham and St Peters Council to develop an educational sign promoting local biodiversity awareness.

The sign highlighted the importance of citizen science to monitor and protect the biodiversity in the Billabong.

The sign was installed in March 2023, during a [nature walk](#) along the area, co-hosted by the Friends of the Billabong group.



### Wombat Forestcare Community Event



Supported by the [Victorian Forest Alliance](#), Peter Crowcroft traveled to the Wombat Forestcare Community to present a workshop on using iNaturalist. He also ran a Moth Night with over 40 attendees per session. The event enabled nature lovers to learn about local biodiversity and actively participate in citizen science engagement.

### City Nature Challenge

Due to study commitments the effort for the City Nature Challenge was reduced in 2023.

5,893 records this was only a slight increase, 108% on the total number of records in 2021 (5,446). The number of participants only increased marginally (219 compared to 203). However, the interest from councils and interest groups has increased. It is hoped that this event will grow next year with the involvement of government and local government.



### Teachers Conference

Our team delivered a workshop on using iNaturalist for citizen science during CONASTA 2023, in Adelaide SA. The workshop was well-attended with 15 teachers from urban and rural schools, who showed interest in using iNaturalist for their lessons.

## Bioblitz workshop at Australian Citizen Science Association Conference 2023

As part of our efforts to engage citizen science practitioners and researchers and discuss challenges and opportunities for bioblitzes, we will be presenting a Bioblitz workshop during the ACSA Conference 2023. The workshop aims to connect citizen science facilitators from different countries, sharing their perspectives and future directions. The event will also launch the GSB 2023 in Australia.



## Bridging citizen science research and practice

We are working collaboratively with 22 co-authors across the globe to analyse, discuss and disseminate the outcomes of the Great Southern Bioblitz. This effort has culminated in the manuscript "[Increased citizen science engagement in the southern hemisphere: the co-created Great Southern BioBlitz](#)", in progress. This article comprises mixed-methods to evaluate the value of citizen science-derived data in a holistic way. A scoping survey was conducted with over 180 participants and interviews are in progress.





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## Situational review

### Grant applications & online engagement

*Ferox australis* has continued to be successful in the number of grants won compared against the number of grants applied for. This has seen an increase in funding for the organisation, allowing for expansion and resource building.

Further, *Ferox* has continued to build a large online following with continued engagement. This has primarily been attributed to consistent engagement on key social media channels such as the Facebook and X platforms through the use of posted blog content on activities, photos of local wildlife, and community discussion.

### Gap analysis

Grant applications, the organisation could improve its ability to effectively apply for grants by widening the pool of grant writers and reducing the burden on each individual. The group also needs to identify opportunities to apply for grants.

The organisation also needs to explore funding opportunities, separate from community grants.

*Ferox australis* needs to build capacity, increasing the size of the organisation particularly in South Australia where it has been undertaking in-person activities.



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## Finances

[See 2022-2023 financial year summary spreadsheet.](#)



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## Strategic initiatives and outlook

In the near future *Ferox australis* needs to investigate widening the membership and building capacity so the organisation can grow and remain sustainable.

### Teacher personal development course for teachers

*Ferox australis* is developing a series of personal development courses for teachers in primary and secondary education. This is being headed up by Nicole Miller, Larissa Braz Sousa and Peter Crowcroft.

### Community Engagement activities

#### Moth night events

Building on the successful 2021-22 events a schedule of Moth nights at Brownhill Creek are to be scheduled.

Resources need to be expanded such as pinned collections, digital resources and equipment.

#### Great Southern Bioblitz 2023

Several partnerships over the GSB2022 weekend have been suggested, these will be pursued and relationships strengthened.

#### Recruiting new members

We aim to recruit new members to strengthen local engagements in different states.