Help us find Australia's most underrated animal!

For Science Week 2025, the ABC is highlighting the plight of underrated animals. Not the usual cuddly crowd-pleasers, but the ugly, the annoying and the lesser-known critters, who are often over-looked, under-conserved and … under-appreciated.

We will be holding a vote to find the nation's most beloved native underdog on social media, ABC News digital and the Radio National text lines.

There will also be loads of stories by ABC specialists, a Live Radio National event in Brisbane and a blog on ABC News to count down the top 10 most underrated animals.

And we especially want you to get outside and see what animals you can see around your home, with some expert tips on how to take fabulous photos of critters with your smartphone.

Visit http://www.abc.net.au/scienceweek

Inspiring Australia

National Science Week is a program of Inspiring Australia, a national strategy for getting Australians engaged with the sciences. The strategy was developed with the science sector to provide national leadership, so that partnerships and collaborations could be formed to build on the myriad of science engagement activities across the country.

The Inspiring Australia Managers in the states and territories help build local networks and provide year-round science engagement opportunities. Visit your state or territory's Inspiring Australia website to find out what is happening in your area.

An Australian Government Initiative

Inspiring AUSTRALIA

national science week 2025

BRAIN BREAK was conceived by the WA National Science Week Coordinating Committee

brain break morning tea

Enjoy your BRAIN BREAK celebrating science

Brain Breaks are a fun and easy way to join in the excitement of National Science Week with your colleagues, school or community. Host a quiz, try a science experiment, and take a moment to reflect on all the ways we rely on science and technology in our everyday lives.

National Science Week runs from 9 to 17 August 2025. It is one of Australia's largest festivals, with 2 million people joining 2000 events across the country each year. To learn more about Science Week, or to find an event near you, visit www.scienceweek.net.au.

Preparing for a BRAIN BREAK

Your Brain Break pack includes quizzes and instructions for science activities. To run an activity, start by considering whether you'll demonstrate it to a group or get everyone involved. Collect all the materials you'll need and test your experiment beforehand.

Take your Brain Break to the next level by featuring someone who works with science. Perhaps you have a colleague with a science background, or know someone who works in science, technology, engineering or mathematics. You could ask if they could share their science story with your group. Talk about how you use science and technology every day and discuss some of the recent science news.

Set your room up with the poster and coasters and have your activity materials close at hand. Invite everyone to bring science-themed snacks like dinosaur cupcakes or lolly molecule models.

Share your Brain Break photos with us on social media using #ScienceWeek and #BrainBreak.

Rice Vice

What you need:

- A clear empty jar or a plastic bottle
- Rice
- A straight wooden stick, e.g. a wooden spoon handle, chopstick or pencil

What to do:

1. Fill your jar/bottle with rice
2. Push the stick down into the rice until it stops.
3. Quickly wiggle the stick up and down within the rice several times.
4. Push the stick in as deep as you can and attempt to pick up the container by the stick.
5. If the stick comes out, repeat steps 3 and 4 ...with enthusiasm!

What's happening?

When the jar is filled with rice, the rice grains face many different directions and there are lots of small air holes between them. When you push the stick into the rice and wriggle it around, you force the rice grains to pack more tightly, filling any gaps.

When the rice grains are packed more tightly, more rice grains are in contact with the stick. Friction is a force that happens when two objects rub against each other. It stops the surfaces from sliding. The stick will feel more friction when more rice touches it directly. If there is enough friction, you can lift the jar of rice using just the stick.

Cool to Touch

What you need:

- Ice cubes
- Stopwatch
- Objects made from:
  - Ceramic
  - Plastic
  - Metal
  - Wood
  - Fabric
  - Glass

What to do:

1. Gather the different objects.
2. Hold each object and rank them in order from 'coolest-to-the-touch' to 'warmest-to-the- touch'.
3. Predict which material the ice cube will melt the fastest on.
4. Place an ice cube on each of the objects and measure the time it takes to melt. Try to make sure it sits flat against them.

What's happening?

Heat energy travels from hot areas to cold areas. Metals feel cool to the touch because they transfer heat quickly away from your hand. This makes them good thermal conductors. Most non-metals like plastics, wood, glass and fabrics feel warm to the touch because they transfer heat slowly away. This makes them good thermal insulators.

Ice cubes melt because they absorb heat energy from their surroundings. Ice cubes melt faster on metals because metals transfer heat energy into the ice cube quicker than non-metals.

Fizzy Sherbet

What you need:

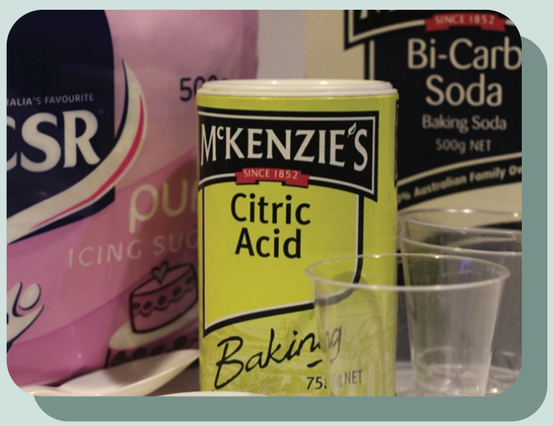
- 1 tablespoon of icing sugar
- 1 teaspoon of bi-carb soda (bicarbonate of soda)
- 1 teaspoon of citric acid
- A cup
- A spoon
- (optional) 2 teaspoons of jelly crystals for flavour

What to do:

1. Add the icing sugar, bi-carb soda and citric acid to the cup. You can also add jelly crystals.
2. Mix well using the spoon.
3. Take a small amount of the mixture and put it on your tongue.
4. (Optional) Try using different ratios of citric acid and bicarbonate of soda (e.g. 1 tsp of citric acid to 2 tsp of bicarbonate) and record if it tastes or feel different on the tongue.

What's happening?

The fizzing on your tongue is from a chemical reaction between the citric acid and the bi-carb soda. When the citric acid and bi-carb soda touch your saliva, they get wet and react together to make bubbles of carbon dioxide that fizz and pop in your mouth. The icing sugar (and jelly crystals) makes the mixture taste nice.



Fast Facts

Missing the mind's eye

Picture a red apple in your mind. Does your apple have a lot of detail or is it more like an outline of the apple? If you can't form a mental image, you might have aphantasia.

People use their 'mind's eye' to visualise a room's décor or to remember the face of an old friend. People with aphantasia rely on different methods for planning or memory recall. Even though they can't create mental images, aphantasics can see images in their dreams.

Rare blood saves millions of babies

James Harrison OAM (1936 – 2025) donated blood fortnightly for over 60 years and has helped save over 2 million babies. His blood had a rare antibody which was used to make a lifesaving medication for unborn babies called Anti-D. There are rare cases where the mother's blood type does not match the baby's blood type. This mismatch can trigger an immune response and can potentially kill the unborn child. Anti-D medication keeps unborn babies safe by preventing the mother's immune system from attacking the baby's blood cells.

New blood donors are always needed, and it could be a while before we find the next James Harrison. For more information on how you can help, visit www.lifeblood.com.au.

Carbon-caffeine concentration coincidence

Greenhouse gases like water vapour, methane and carbon dioxide trap heat and keep planet Earth warm enough for life. Since the 1700s, human activity has increased the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere from 280 parts per million (ppm) to 400ppm. That means for every million gas molecules, 400 molecules are carbon dioxide. Though 400ppm seems small, your coffee has 400ppm of caffeine. Imagine a day where all you drank was decaf. You might have a better understanding of how small changes can have a big effect.