How To:

Spotlight for Arboreal Mammals

Resilient Landscapes

National Environmental Science Program

1 What is spotlighting?

Spotlighting is a common method used by citizen scientists and ecologists to survey and monitor nocturnal species. It utilises an animal's reflective eyeshine to locate then identify species.

For many species, spotlighting is the recommended way to find, survey and estimate population numbers!

2 Equipment needed

Its best to have a **very bright** torch or head torch- the brighter the better. The key with spotlighting is project the torch light **in line with your eyesight (as close to your eyes as possible)** to spot the reflective eyeshine of animals.

Binoculars are useful to help with species identification.

If possible, use **red** torch light or a red filter to observe behaviour.

3 Techniques

1. Decide on a route along a **suitable trail**
2. As you walk, slowly and methodically scan the tree canopy for reflective eyeshine, stopping every now and then to scan around and behind you.
3. Once you spot an animal's eyeshine, use **binoculars** to assist in species identification.
4. Try to minimise disturbance to the animal by moving on after about 1 minute.
5. Spotlight in **small groups** and **stay quiet.**

4 Identifying species

Getting a **clear view** of the animal will help with identification.
Refer to species ID guides and note the **colour of the eyeshine** to assist in identification.

5 Recording your findings

Use your phone or a GPS to record the location of animals spotted. If possible, take a photo. Remember to upload to inaturalist!

iNaturalist

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