



Be on watch for turtles

A MURDOCH University PhD student is asking people to record sightings of wild oblong turtles to help preserve the species.

Caitlin Bartholomaeus said there had been very little research into the turtle, a native freshwater species, and it was important to understand how the reptile was coping with urban development and a changing climate.

People who live close to or who visit the turtles' habitat in wetlands around Cockburn can log any sightings with the Turtle Watch hotline (9417 8460) and the ClimateWatch website (www.climatewatch.org.au).

Useful information could include the location of the turtle, its size, behaviour and the time and date it was seen.

Sightings of dead turtles and nests with eggs should also be reported.

"Members of the public can help us to increase monitoring levels by logging their sightings of turtles anytime, anywhere and in any condition," Ms Bartholomaeus said.

"This, coupled with our own fieldwork of catching turtles, measuring them, marking them and releasing them back into the wild over the course of the spring and summer will help us make an estimation of

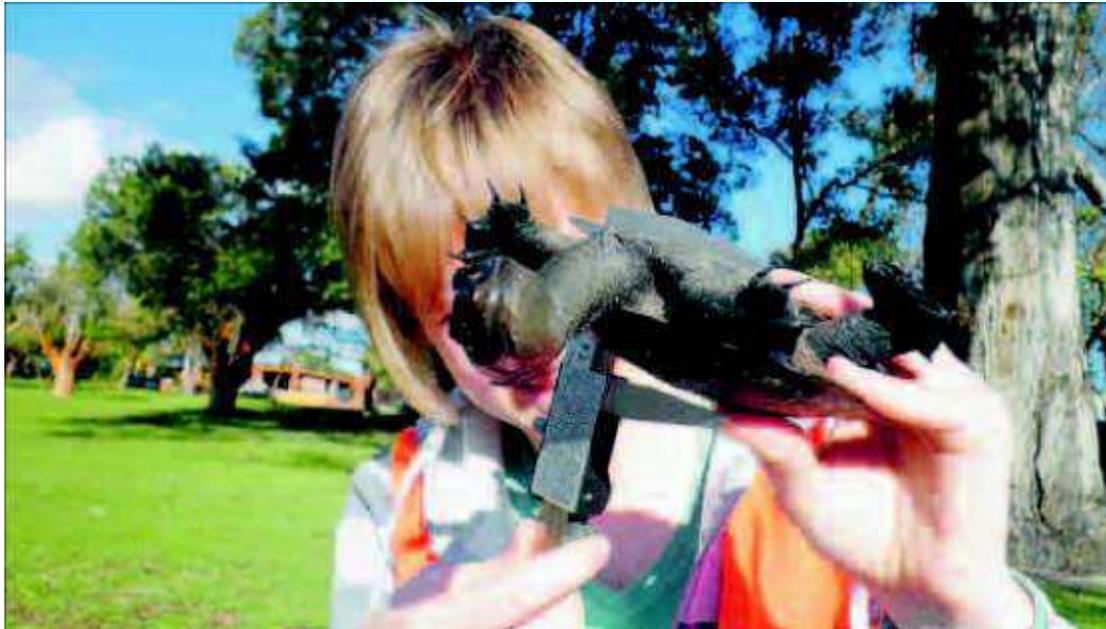
the population size.

"The lack of research on oblong turtles means that we currently cannot separate the threats to them from climate change and the threats from suburbia," she said.

"These turtles are the top predators underwater and their loss could be catastrophic for our local wetlands."

Oblong turtles have very long necks and the adult shell can be 30-40 centimetres long, ranging in colour from brown to black.

They can be found in the Beelihar Wetlands as well as in many lakes in the Perth metropolitan area.



Researcher Caitlin Bartholomaeus is asking people to report sightings of wild oblong turtles.

Picture: Shino Hamada