

*Behaviour and attitude changes after using a turtle conservation citizen science app*

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TurtleSAT is a citizen science app that was developed to collect locations of freshwater turtles and their nests across Australia. We used an online questionnaire to investigate the consequences of using this app for participants. Specifically, we asked participants whether their knowledge of turtles and their skills improved, and whether their behaviour and attitudes towards turtles and their conservation changed after contributing turtle sightings to TurtleSAT. 148 citizen scientists completed our questionnaire, mostly from the Australian states of New South Wales and Victoria. They reported that after learning about the current decline in turtle populations, they adopted several turtle-friendly practices, such as habitat restoration or moving turtles out of harm's way, underlining the importance of increasing people's awareness on species declines. 70% of respondents claimed to have learned more about turtles by using TurtleSAT, and 47% reported an increase in their ability to identify turtle species. Also, 84% of respondents claimed to feel that their participation in TurtleSAT helps turtles, and 70% are now more concerned about turtle conservation than they were before participating. Generally, respondents who claimed to have detected an improvement in either knowledge or skills also claimed to have changed their behaviour or attitudes towards turtles. Whilst it is important to interpret these results cautiously, as they come from self-reported data, it is possible that the reported changes in attitudes and behaviours will positively impact the conservation of Australian freshwater turtles. Engagement with citizen science projects like TurtleSAT could result in participants being more interested in the natural world, thanks to learning more about it and being more exposed to it. By providing this experience, citizen science may in turn inspire a greater environmental protection.



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