

# World record breakers

*"In the Guinness Book of Records-style list, the entry for Australian biota would be impressive."*

Professor Andrew Beattie,  
Macquarie University

## **Oldest**

Researchers have found fossils in the Pilbara, in Western Australia, which represent some of the earliest life forms known on the planet. They are stromatolites, large hard clumps of photosynthetic bacteria which date back three and a half billion years. They represent the earliest life form known on the planet. Remarkably, living examples of stromatolites still flourish today in shallow seas just off the coast of Shark Bay, Western Australia, practically identical to their fossil ancestors.

## **Largest**

The Great Barrier Reef – one of the wonders of the world – the largest structure ever built by living things, is 207,000 square km of living coral polyps (300 species), fish and sea life.

## **Tallest**

Deep in the groves of Victoria's high mountain forests, the mountain ash in East Gippsland grows up to 100 metres high and is the world's tallest flowering plant.