INTRODUCTION

Environmental monitoring has long been considered to be of minor scientific value compared to manipulative experiments and theoretical work in ecology and is often seen as an expensive and unrewarding practice (Legg & Nagy 2006, Lovett et al. 2007). Mounting evidence that the systematic collection of reliable environmental and/or biological data may provide important insights into natural and human-driven changes to ecosystems (Lovett et al. 2007) has increased awareness that adequate programs for continued data collection are necessary to achieve effective environmental management (e.g. Babcock et al. 2010, Fraschetti et al. 2012, 2013, Bates et al. 2014), leading to integration of routine assessment and monitoring procedures in regulatory frameworks at international level (e.g. Borja et al. 2010).

Indeed, environmental monitoring plays a key role in ecology, providing crucial information for hyp-