

Capacity building

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Narrandera's Koala Count: Citizen Science Driving Conservation for 45 Years

Murrumbidgee Landcare Inc



The Narrandera Koala Count is one of Australia's longest-running citizen science monitoring programs, critical to sustaining the Narrandera Koala colony's conservation over five decades.

The issue

After successfully lobbying for the first koala translocation for conservation purposes in NSW in the early 1970s, the Narrandera Koala colony experienced a lack of sustained formal monitoring and an increase in government oversight. Despite the pioneering nature of the translocation, ongoing scientific tracking was absent, leaving the long-term health and size of the population uncertain. Without regular monitoring, risks such as habitat degradation, disease, or population decline could go unnoticed. This lack of data and official support created a precarious situation, threatening the survival of a colony that was critical to regional conservation efforts.



The solution

The community initiated the Narrandera Koala Count in 1979, encouraging locals to monitor koala numbers. This citizen science event has run continuously for over 45 years, supported by the local Council, volunteers, and Narrandera Local Landcare Group. In recent years, ecologist Ian Davidson contributed to shifting the timing of the count to September to better track population recruitment. With Murrumbidgee Landcare Inc's involvement, the count has evolved to improve data collection and boost community engagement, now incorporating citizen science platforms like I Spy Koala and iNaturalist, making it a vital conservation tool for the local koala colony.



The impact

The Koala Count has been essential in maintaining public interest and shaping conservation efforts, resulting in a thriving population estimated at over 290 koalas within the Narrandera Flora and Fauna Reserve. The population has also expanded into the Leeton and Wagga Wagga Local Government Areas. Building on the success of the count, Murrumbidgee Landcare Inc aims to extend the event to these new regions by collaborating with local groups, Councils and Riverina Local Land Services to boost public engagement and further support koala conservation within the Murrumbidgee River Corridor.

Learnings

Sustained community involvement and citizen science can fill gaps left by limited government monitoring. Consistent data collection allows adaptive management and highlights the importance of local ownership in conservation success.

Key facts

- Annual event since 1979
- One of Australia's longest-running citizen science programs
- Population growth from 23 founder koalas to 290+ individuals
- Integral to ongoing conservation and habitat management efforts

Project Partners



This initiative is made possible by the NSW Landcare Enabling Program, a collaboration between Local Land Services and Landcare NSW supported by the NSW Government.

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