



Securing the koala in the wild in NSW for 100 years

Saving Our Species Iconic Koala Project



Office of
Environment
& Heritage

The iconic koala

The Saving our Species Iconic Koala Project aims to secure the koala in the wild in NSW for 100 years by:

- reducing critical threats to the species
- ensuring adequate protection, management and restoration of koala habitat
- maintaining healthy breeding populations of koalas throughout their current range.



The Project

Action Toolbox

A set of broad actions to provide a conservation guide for anyone interested in helping koalas.

Priority koala populations

Areas known to be occupied by significant koala populations to be prioritised for conservation action and investment.

Detailed actions

Some conservation actions have been funded by Saving our Species and are underway for 2016–17. Public input will help guide priority actions for 2017–18 and beyond.

Coordination

The project will align all koala conservation in NSW so that the species has the best chance of being secure in the wild in the long term.

Top: Koala *Phascolarctos cinereus*

(J. Turbill/OEH)

Bottom: Southern Highlands Koala Conservation Project

(Stuart Cohen, Bottlebrush Media)

Have your say

We are seeking your feedback on the draft Saving our Species Iconic Koala Project.

1. Tell us what you are doing to help manage and conserve koalas.
 - There may be opportunities to promote your work to a wider audience.
2. Do you have comments on the draft action toolbox?
 - For example, are there other actions to conserve koalas that should be included?
3. Is there an important population of koalas that we should prioritise for conservation action? Detailed evidence should be provided for any suggestions.
4. Are there any state-wide, regional or local actions that should be prioritised through the Iconic Koala Project in the coming years?
 - There may be strategic state-wide approaches to conservation that we have not yet considered, such as community engagement initiatives.
 - Detailed conservation actions for 2017–18 through to 2020–21 will be required across the NSW range of the koala.

We also welcome any other feedback.

Visit the Priorities Action Statement amendments page to submit your comments.

www.environment.nsw.gov.au/threatenedspecies/ProposedPASAmendments.htm



How can people get involved?

Visit the Threatened species page (www.environment.nsw.gov.au/threatenedspecies) to:

- learn more about threatened species
- search for threatened species or projects in your local area
- tell us more about the projects you or your group are doing
- subscribe to regular newsletters updating you on the program.

If you are already working in threatened species conservation, share information on your activities and track the progress of your project on the website (www.environment.nsw.gov.au/savingourspecies/GetInvolved.htm).

Saving the koala

The NSW Government recognises the important contributions made by individuals and communities who have been involved in koala conservation and management for many decades.

For the next five years, on-ground management of the koala in NSW will be guided by the Saving our Species Iconic Koala Project. The draft project is available on the OEH website (www.environment.nsw.gov.au/threatenedspecies/ProposedPASAmendments.htm).

A draft Action Toolbox has been designed to provide a conservation guide for anyone interested in helping koalas.

Priorities for funding through Saving our Species are determined by an expert panel including representatives from the Office of Environment and Heritage as well as koala experts from a range of fields.

Saving our Species aims to address threats that are critically affecting the koala's long-term viability which can be reasonably addressed by land managers, communities and experts.



Photography: The koala catcher and team in action
(Sebastian Miller/Volunteer)

Action toolbox – addressing critical threats to the koala

The following actions may help guide koala conservation across NSW by land managers, community members and government organisations. These actions are designed to address critical threats to koalas across the landscape from local to regional to state-wide scales, prioritising actions that deliver conservation on the ground.

Loss, modification and fragmentation of habitat

- In areas where a koala population is present, undertake planting to restore and increase the area of koala habitat. Restoration and augmentation planting and/or direct seeding should use appropriate feed and shelter tree species in areas of degraded and/or potentially suitable habitat. Revegetation should focus on expanding existing smaller areas of known occupied habitat, including private land, and connecting areas of suitable habitat to create corridors for movement. Resources for long-term monitoring and management of revegetated areas should be included.
- In areas where a koala population is present, negotiate agreements with landholders, particularly in-perpetuity covenants or stewardship agreements that promote the protection and retention of high quality koala habitat or habitat that contributes significantly to connectivity in the landscape.
- In areas where a koala population is present, undertake koala habitat studies and mapping using standardised methods and terminology to identify key koala populations and rank and map koala habitat. Centralised mapping and database to include details of works, methods, costs, sources of funding and outcomes of monitoring.

Vehicle strike

- Identify blackspots where koala road mortalities are greatest and target proven mitigation techniques such as fencing and wildlife crossings, in discussion with council and Roads and Maritime Services. Mitigation may also involve the development, testing and deployment of new technologies that can reduce vehicle strike.
- Liaise with Roads and Maritime Services and local councils in the development of new/existing roads to plan koala barrier fencing and crossings as part of road construction projects.

Predation by roaming or domestic dogs

- Conduct local community awareness campaigns in areas where attacks by domestic dogs on koalas are prevalent to raise awareness of the impacts and the importance of responsible dog ownership, including keeping dogs restrained on leads and in properly fenced enclosures.

Intense prescribed burns or wildfires that scorch or burn the tree canopy

- Liaise with relevant authorities or land managers to ensure that identified koala habitat areas are defined as assets for protection in fire planning tools when managing wildfires and prior to any hazard reduction burns. Promote best practice fire management protocols in areas of significant koala populations.
- Liaise with authorities or land managers to ensure that any unavoidable prescribed burns within koala habitat are conducted in a way that minimises impacts on koala habitat and individual koalas, based on best practice guidelines.

Koala disease

- Improve understanding of the role of chlamydia in koala population dynamics and mortality, including baseline genetic information and links between habitat disturbance and disease-related morbidity, by conducting research in collaboration with universities, vets and ecologists.

Heat stress through drought and heatwaves

- Support carer and vet networks in their response to the management of koala health and welfare during extreme weather conditions.
- Research and trial adaptation management actions such as installation of artificial water sources and the establishment of refuge habitat, and promote connectivity through habitat restoration.

Human-induced climate change

- Use predicted climate change data and modelling techniques to predict the possible impacts on koalas from climate change. This should include how koala habitat is likely to change under different climate change scenarios, such as temperature rise impacts on habitat, drought and wildfires. Use this information to prioritise adaptation actions and investment in habitat and corridor protection and restoration.

Inadequate support for fauna rehabilitation

- Support koala rehabilitation groups and vets to rehabilitate sick and injured koalas through training, provision of materials, and promotion of state-wide protocols including for rehabilitation, genetic profiling, record-keeping and release to the wild.

Lack of knowledge (poor understanding of sources of trauma and mortality)

- Engage with koala rehabilitation groups and other information sources to better understand the causes of koala trauma and mortality. Collate and map the results.

Lack of knowledge (poor understanding of population distribution and trend)

- Develop standardised method and reporting for monitoring change in koala populations and distribution through time and contribute survey data to centralised database. Include genetic information where possible.
- Support the collation of koala survey records and monitoring information through a centralised database for state-wide reporting and analysis, contributing sighting records to NSW BioNet.

Lack of knowledge (poor understanding of animal movements and use of habitat)

- Improve understanding of koala movements and use of their habitat in the landscape by conducting targeted research on individuals using GPS collars and mark-recapture techniques.

Getting the community engaged in koala conservation

- Use multiple channels to engage the community in koala conservation and recovery actions across the state. This includes communication strategies, citizen science, volunteers, on-ground conservation actions, awareness programs, and landholder engagement.



Evidence-based koala conservation

Projects supported with Saving our Species funds in 2016–17 have been designed to inform future koala conservation actions through a combination of threat mitigation, research, monitoring and community engagement.

Projects include:

- Identification and mapping of refuge habitat in the Gunnedah region and trial of artificial water sources for koalas to mitigate the impacts of heat stress.
- Fire management planning and monitoring for southern NSW koala populations to maximise protection of human assets and koala habitat.
- Supporting pilot projects to mitigate dog attacks in key locations, including analysis of dog attack records and compliance effort, identification of high-risk areas, and development of targeted community engagement.
- Identification of key vehicle strike black spots for targeted mitigation including trials to modify driver behaviour through wildlife-activated signage.
- Targeted habitat restoration projects that promote long-term conservation and improved habitat condition and connectivity.
- Establishment of a centralised database to store and analyse monitoring and reporting data for koala conservation, including koala rehabilitation records.
- State-wide spatial analysis of koala records, habitat mapping and other data to inform future conservation priorities.
- Mapping koala habitat and corridors in Wollondilly for use in planning and assessment.

How does Saving our Species work with other initiatives?

The Saving our Species Iconic Koala Project will complement the efforts of all those involved in koala conservation across NSW.

It will also be a key initiative in support of a whole-of-government koala strategy, to be developed by June 2017.

For more information about the Chief Scientist and Engineer's report to the Minister for the Environment recommending the development of a whole-of-government koala strategy, visit the website (www.environment.nsw.gov.au/animals/nsw-koala-strategy.htm).



Photography: The koala is an arboreal herbivorous marsupial native to Australia (J. Turbill/OEH)

Find out more about threatened species at:

www.environment.nsw.gov.au/sos

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