Support the endangered Koala

Australian Wildlife Conservancy has a long history of conserving and managing Eucalypt forests and woodlands, protecting the endangered Koala at three sanctuaries and across nearly 65,000 ha. Koala populations have suffered a dramatic decline in recent years - in large part due to population fragmentation and a loss of suitable habitat. AWC supports these populations by preserving the forests they call home, as well as pursuing new and innovative research techniques that provide crucial data on population density, distribution and potential threats, which can then be used to inform conservation activities.

Land Management

Land management is an essential component of forest conservation and restoration, particularly in regard to the control of invasive weeds and fire. AWC employs a practical and effective weed removal program at all three sanctuaries, targeting species such as blackberry, fireweed and lantana – all weeds of national significance. Lantana had invaded over half of the land at Curramore when it was first acquired by AWC twenty years ago, providing impossible competition to the native vegetation. The success of our weed management at Curramore has reduced this impact, and is now being employed at Gorton Forest – a critical step in securing the future of endangered species such as the Koala.

Fire has, for hundreds of years, played an integral role in landscape ecology and culture across the country – from dry savannah to wet sclerophyll rainforest. AWC uses best-practice, and culturally informed fire regimes to promote natural cycles, and maintain the diversity and integrity of the environments that we protect. The aim of our fire management program at forest sanctuaries in NSW and QLD is to reduce the frequency and risk of severe, uncontrollable wildfires that have lasting negative impacts on wildlife and vegetation.

Gorton Forest understorey. Brad Leue/AWC.

Koala. Brad Leue/AWC.

Research

From a scientific perspective, the Koala is a difficult species to monitor and study. They spend most of their time motionless in tall trees, so not only are they difficult to find, but they also don't respond well to baiting methods. Despite this, ecologists are determined to learn more about the species distribution of Koalas at Curramore, Mount-Zero, and eventually Gorton, prompting the exploration of a new and innovative approach.

Thanks to contribution from the federal government's Koala Conservation and Protection Grant, AWC is hoping to learn a lot more about its Koala populations by deploying bioacoustic monitors across suitable Koala habitat at the two sanctuaries. By high-tech 'listening', ecologists hope to conduct larger-scale monitoring of the species and establish baseline data about the presence and abundance of Koalas on sanctuary. At Curramore, ecologists will also use thermal drone surveys to compare the effectiveness of both technologies.

Acoustic recorders are useful in monitoring cryptic species that vocalise during the breeding season, or which are most active at night, like frogs. The devices can be left out in the field for extended periods of time, allowing AWC ecologists to collect a high volume of quality data more efficiently than ever before. This particular survey method will take advantage of Koala vocalisations, relying on a repertoire of grunts, growls and barks to provide important data that will be essential for conserving the future of this endangered, and iconic species.

Thank you for supporting this project – your contribution to conserving the endangered Koala has been essential in ensuring continued progress for the species.