

## Support the endangered Koala

Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC) has a long history of conserving and managing Eucalypt forests and woodlands, and currently protect the endangered Koala at three sanctuaries. Population fragmentation and a loss of suitable habitat has resulted in dramatic Koala population decline, such that the species was listed as endangered in 2022. AWC supports these populations by preserving Koala habitat, as well as pursuing new and innovative research techniques that provide crucial data on population density, distribution and potential threats. This crucial research provides insights into the most effective areas to promote koala conservation and recovery in the future.

### *Waulinbakh Wildlife Sanctuary*

It has been one year since AWC announced the establishment of Waulinbakh Wildlife Sanctuary. Waulinbakh translates to 'Grey Gum Place' in Gathang, the language spoken by Birripi (Biripi), Guringai (Gringai) and Warrimay (Worimi) people. Located on the Traditional Lands of the Worimi Nation, the sanctuary provides 3,970 hectares of suitable Koala habitat and is situated in an Area of Regional Koala Significance, recognised by the NSW government.

Biodiversity surveying has been a major focus in the first year on sanctuary. These efforts enable scientists to establish crucial baseline data as part of an inaugural and ongoing EcoHealth program. Excitingly, preliminary surveys have confirmed the presence of Koalas at Waulinbakh Wildlife Sanctuary, along with a suite of other threatened or endangered species that are now protected by AWC.

In the next stage, AWC staff will focus on expanding weed removal efforts, undergoing feral animal control, and conducting more detailed ecological surveys. Efforts will then shift to developing the infrastructure required for ongoing science and research, as well as hosting volunteers and visitors to the sanctuary, for the purposes of educating on wildlife conservation, and improving awareness on the threats that Koalas face. AWC also continues to engage with Traditional Custodians, building strong relationships with the Biripi, Gringai and Worimi people.





Koala. Brad Leue/AWC.

## Research

Koalas are a difficult species for scientists to monitor, and it was almost a year before the first koala had been captured on camera at Waulinbakh Wildlife Sanctuary. Spending most of their time motionless in tall trees, koalas are not only hard to find, they also don't respond well to baiting methods. Despite this, ecologists are determined to study the species distribution of koalas at all three sanctuaries where they can be found: Curramore, Mount-Zero, and Waulinbakh Wildlife Sanctuary. Innovative new technologies can help to achieve this goal.

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 for monitoring cryptic, but vocal species - such as frogs and koalas.. The devices can be left out in the field for extended periods of time, allowing 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 informing the conservation 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.

