

# Great Koala Count: Aussies urged to track sightings of iconic marsupials

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Koalas are endangered in NSW, ACT and QLD. There are concerns about local koala populations in SA and VIC. Credit: Seth Seden, CSIRO

CSIRO, Australia's national science agency, is calling on Australians to record koala sightings in the Koala Spotter app, to help build the most accurate national population count to date.

Populations of the iconic marsupial were officially listed as endangered

across New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory and Queensland in February 2022.

Although numbers in South Australia and Victoria appear healthier, there are concerns for [local populations](#) amid the ongoing threats of habitat loss, car strikes, and disease.

During National Science Week 2024, themed Species Survival—More Than Just Sustainability, CSIRO is encouraging families across the country to actively take part in koala conservation.

CSIRO leads and coordinates the [National Koala Monitoring Program \(NKMP\)](#), a \$10 million project funded by the Australian Government's Saving Koalas Fund. The [collaborative program](#) aims to build and deliver a robust estimate of koala numbers, which will aid ongoing recovery and management efforts.

CSIRO Quantitative Biologist, Dr. Andrew Hoskins, said a range of technologies and methods are needed to count koalas accurately.

"Koalas can be difficult to spot from the ground, and as they are most active at night, they often rest high in trees during the day," Dr. Hoskins said.

"To count the species, scientists have been using thermal drones to spot koalas from above, deploying acoustic recorders in the field and detection dogs, conducting scat analysis, while also carrying out systematic visual surveys and [data integration](#) from previous and historical sources.

"We need as many different eyes as possible to help paint the most accurate picture of koala numbers and distribution across the country.

"Citizen science apps are playing an increasingly important role, as they allow anybody to come out and record their sightings."

The latest koala national population estimate according to NKMP is between 224,000 and 524,000. The next estimate is due in March 2025.

The Koala Spotter app has played a key part in the NKMP's population count, with 730 records contributed by citizen scientists to date.

"Most of the data we've gotten from the app so far has come from families and children," Dr. Hoskins said.

"It's very easy to use, and the data provided is fed straight into the National Koala Monitoring Program.

"If you spot a koala simply record its location in the app, try and snap a photo if possible, and press 'done.'"

As part of National Science week, CSIRO is hosting a webinar and curriculum-aligned activities for [school students](#) to learn about koala populations and how to use CSIRO's Koala Spotter app.

To record sightings, download Koala Spotter from the [App Store](#) (Apple) or the [Google Play Store](#) (Android).

[Register](#) for The Great Koala Count webinar (suited to Year 4 to 6 students).

Provided by CSIRO

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