

Smartphone app ready for South Australia's Great Koala Count

The first Great Koala Count in South Australia is taking place on 28 November, with people across the state being urged to monitor and record their experiences and sightings of koalas on that day.



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The citizen science project, a joint collaboration involving the University of South Australia and ABC local radio, will enable data to be collected about the iconic marsupials, to determine their range and population distribution around the state.

Professor Chris Daniels, Director of the Barbara Hardy Institute, says the count will build a detailed picture of koala hotspots in South Australia which will prove useful in learning more about these sleep-friendly, eucalypt eating animals.

‘Koalas have a fascinating history in South Australia,’ Prof Daniels says.

‘They were hunted to extinction in the south east in the 1900s but colonies were established on Kangaroo Island and their numbers increased again as they were bought back to the mainland in areas including Mt Lofty in the 1950s and 1960s.’

‘As their natural habitat of woodlands and forests is under threat from urban development, koalas have become an increasingly suburban animal.

‘It’s incredibly difficult to know how many there are out there now, but as most koalas are quite at home in people’s backyards, we are appealing for people to monitor and send to us their findings on that day.’

A smartphone app will be made available on the Koala Count day, which observers can download and use to record and capture location data, using GPS technology.

‘We also have about 30-40 schools that will be taking part in the event and believe it will be a great opportunity for everyone to learn more about their environment and to appreciate sharing their space with these wonderful animals,’ Prof Daniels says.

‘The information that is collected will be compiled into a book which will be published next year.’

The Great Koala Count is a joint initiative between the Department of Environment Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR), the Adelaide and Mt Lofty NRM Board, CSIRO, the University of South Australia and ABC Local Radio.

For further information there is a Great Koala Count Facebook page, a series of YouTube videos about the count and about koalas, and a number of teacher resources available.

Source: University of South Australia

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