

communicate with students, reaching more than 300 students on an annual basis. What FOK educators are finding in their regular contact with children, is the high level of knowledge amongst local students relating to Australia's native wildlife and, in particular, koalas. Most students have had contact with Australia's endearing icon or can have their first encounter at one of the many combined school events, held in koala habitat at the Lismore City Council's Botanical Gardens education site. We are always fortunate to have a koala in attendance; however, the challenge is to locate it.

Students are provided with the opportunity to put on their detective hats; they are guided in what signs to look for when koalas are known to be present (e.g. scats and scratch marks on trees). While children are initially excited by the sight of a koala, whether in a tree or on the ground, they are also learning to determine if the koala is in distress or unhealthy. Furthermore, they are taught how to report an injured koala, and whether it requires FOK's assistance.

The New South Wales Environmental Trust funded 'Koala Watch' project has generated an education resource package that is suitable for all members of the community. The success of this ongoing education, across all sectors of the community, has led to an escalation



School Education Program - Eltham Public School.

in the reporting of koala sightings and an increase in the number of koalas coming into care. As part of the 'Koala Watch' project, students are issued with

a fridge magnet with the FOK rescue number. Students of all ages can also access activity sheets on the FOK website <https://www.friendsofthekoala.org/>.

Key outcome and impact of the funding provided: in 2019, Friends of the Koala (FOK) engaged with students and members of the community at a number of events such as Lismore City Council 'Upcycle' family education day, Eltham Public School Education Program and Rocky Creek Dam Environmental Family Education Day, to educate students and members of the community about the importance of koala conservation. Students and members of the community were taught what signs to look for when koalas are known to be present (e.g. scats and scratch marks on trees), to determine if a koala is in distress or unhealthy, how to report an injured koala, and if it requires FOK's assistance. FOK successfully educated more than 300 students and members of the community about the importance of koala conservation.

Save Australia's Wonderful Wombats: A Wombats SA Education Project

Sally Letcher

Wombats SA aims to promote and raise public awareness of the value of conserving Australia's native flora and fauna through the maintenance and re-establishment of natural ecosystems and wiser land use. Currently, our main objectives are the management, maintenance and restoration of Moorunde Wildlife Reserve, which is the first established and currently largest sanctuary for the southern hairy-nosed wombat (*Lasiorhinus latifrons*) in the Murraylands Mallee, and one reserve near the town of Robe, southeast of Adelaide.

In recent years, southern hairy-nosed wombats in the Murraylands have faced many threats. The last couple of years have been very difficult,

largely due to overgrazing pressures on the land and weather conditions, which have meant their native grasses haven't come back since the end of the last drought in 2012. In addition to the resulting malnutrition and starvation, many local farmers and landholders view wombats as vermin to be destroyed. We have seen disturbing evidence of wombats that have been culled both legally and illegally by shooting or bulldozing warrens over vast areas, leaving the wombats trapped to die slow deaths. Wombats SA, together with other groups, individuals and researchers, under the name Wombats Alliance, is working towards a long-term and region-wide solution to the overgrazing situation.



Wombats SA has been developing resources to promote greater public awareness of the endangered southern hairy-nosed wombat. A website has been developed, which contains student resources, as well as comprehensive teacher notes, units of work, and enquiry activities for students from foundation through to year six. These



Southern hairy-nosed wombat (*Lasiorhinus latifrons*) at Moorunde Reserve. Photo: Karen Collins

units align with both the Australian Curriculum and International Baccalaureate frameworks. Through the study of a species, such as the southern hairy-nosed wombat, students will be encouraged to see the relevance of their classroom studies to the complex environmental issues confronting the country they live in. We hope that these resources will assist teachers in equipping their students with the skills they need to be creative problem solvers

and powerful advocates, to contribute to a healthy environment that supports all those who depend upon it.

In the next few months, we will also be conducting and filming several interviews with experts and volunteers. These interviews will help bring conservation and science to life in classrooms by providing students with the opportunity to hear from, and potentially interact with, people in the field.

While these resources are focused on the southern hairy-nosed wombat, they can easily be adapted to suit wombats in other regions. If you know a school, teacher or organisation who may wish to use them, we welcome you to share the following link with them <https://www.saveourwonderfulwombats.org.au>

Key outcome and impact of the funding provided: Wombats SA developed education resources to promote greater public awareness of the endangered southern hairy-nosed wombat. A website containing student resources was developed, which also provides comprehensive teacher notes, units of work, and enquiry activities for students from foundation through to year six. These units align with both the Australian Curriculum and International Baccalaureate frameworks. Through the study of a species, such as the southern hairy-nosed wombat, students were encouraged to see the relevance of their classroom studies to the complex environmental issues confronting the country they live in. These resources also assist teachers in equipping their students with the skills they need to be creative problem solvers and powerful advocates for a healthy environment that supports all those who depend upon it.

Tree Roo Rescue and Conservation Centre: A Very Special Australian Animal is in Trouble

Dr Karen Coombes



Mickie, a blind adult male Lumholtz's tree-kangaroo with his favourite umbrella flower (*Schefflera actinophylla*).

Did you know that kangaroos can climb trees? In 1872, William Hann stated, "to entertain the idea that any kangaroo known to us, or approaching its formation, could climb a tree, would be ridiculous". An individual might think that a kangaroo is incapable of climbing a tree; however, there is indeed a very special kangaroo that can climb a tree – a tree kangaroo.

There are 14 species of tree kangaroos. 12 species are found in Papua New Guinea and Australia has two very unique and endemic species – the Lumholtz's tree-kangaroo (*Dendrolagus lumholtzi*) and Bennett's tree-kangaroo (*Dendrolagus bennettianus*). Both species are found only in Far North Queensland and nowhere else in the world. While Bennett's is found north of the Daintree River, Lumholtz's distribution is from the Cardwell Ranges to the Daintree region, although it is found mostly in a fragmented rainforest on the Atherton Tablelands.

Many Australians don't even know these amazing animals exist, let alone that we have two very unique endemic species here in Australia.

The Lumholtz's faces several threats from habitat loss to dog attacks and vehicle strikes. In the past eight years, a new danger to their survival has emerged. An alarming number of Lumholtz's have been presenting with neurological or central blindness, with an increase of animals coming into care every year. Last year was the worst year, with one blind tree-kangaroo rescue being completed per week from August 2019 through to January 2020.

Tree Roo Rescue and Conservation Centre Ltd (TRRACC) is a non-profit organisation that is committed to rescuing and rehabilitating orphaned, injured or displaced Australian tree-kangaroos and returning them to the wild. However, if a tree-kangaroo is blind, returning it to the wild is not