

NKMP Methodologies



Scats

NATIONAL KOALA MONITORING PROGRAM

The National Koala Monitoring Program (NKMP) aims to fill knowledge gaps for future Koala recovery and management efforts. CSIRO is leading the design of the four-year program and facilitating the roll out of NKMP with the broader Australian community. The key objectives of this monitoring program are:

- Inclusive – to enable all members of the Australian community to contribute to this national koala monitoring effort.
- Long-term – to build individual and collaborative capacity to collect robust data that can be used for evidence-based decision-making.
- Integrative - to build best-practice methods and data management systems to integrate available and new data to provide local and national insights into koala population status and trends.

The NKMP uses a wide range of approaches to monitoring koalas. This enables us to use a wealth of existing knowledge and suit our data collection methods to the specific needs of each site.

Keen to learn more? Visit [National Koala Monitoring Program](#). Any questions or keen to find out how you can share your koala observations or data? Contact us at KoalaMonitoring@csiro.au

PROTOCOL

Scats are faecal pellets that provide a methodology to help measure Koala presence and can be analysed to help assess koala DNA and health. Koala detection dogs can also be used to help small and detect koala scat. Fresh scat (less than two weeks old) is needed to undertake DNA analysis in a laboratory.



NKMP Methodologies



Scats

Collecting scat is well tested and can be a useful method to compare to and between many data sets. For examples scats can be collected as part of balanced koala scat spot survey method outlined by Jiang et al (2019) [The development of improved scat survey method for koalas (*Phascolarctos cinereus*), Australian Journal of Zoology, 2019, 67, 125–133]. As these authors outline, ‘scat spotting assessment at each survey site comprises 30 trees including a centre tree central to the nearest 29 trees. The centre tree is subjectively selected by the following criteria:

- any tree with koala scats around, and/or
- any tree with a koala spotted using it, and/or
- any tree considered important for koalas, such as a food tree.



For all 30 trees, a consistent search effort of two person-minutes per tree is conducted within a fixed 1m radius around the tree base. Each search ends when either a koala scat is found or the designated time is up.

Choosing Your Location

If you are following an NKMP survey design, you will be provided with an ordered list of sampling points within a cluster. Start by selecting the first point in the list. If that point is not accessible for safety or logistical reasons, move down the list to the next point and so on until you have an accessible survey point.

You may be following a different survey design set up by your organisation. In this case follow your site selection protocol and try to incorporate the methods outlined above as far as practical into your own design.

NKMP Methodologies



Scats

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The NKMP acknowledges the 120+ workshop participants who reviewed a range of koala survey and approaches as part of the 2023 National Koala Conference.