



So how many Koalas were there?

Recent Australian Koala Foundation research has revealed at least 8 million Koalas were killed for the fur trade, with their pelts shipped to London, the United States and Canada between 1888 and 1927.

The current population of approximately 85,000 wild Koalas in Australia represents only 1 per cent of those shot for the fur trade.

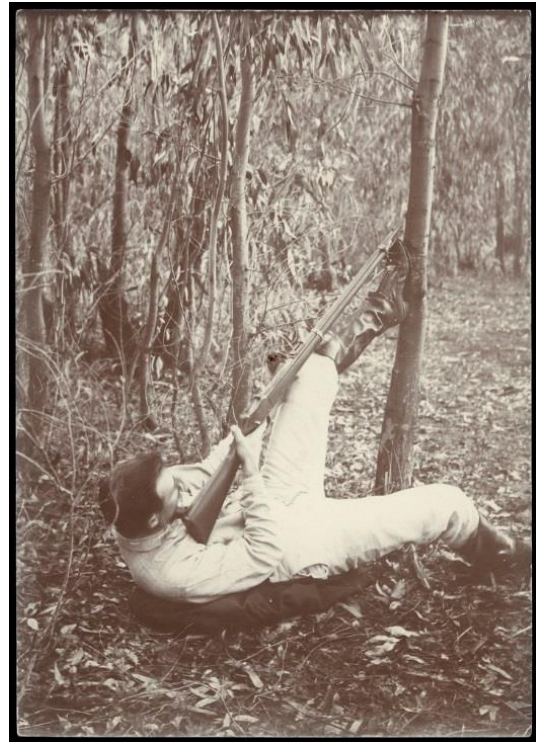


Despite being one of Australia's most recognisable animals, very little is known about the history and distribution of the Koala prior to the fur trade. In order to improve current management of the species it is vital that we better understand the impact of European Settlement on the Koala. Where did those Koalas come from? What did the distribution of Koalas look like before Europeans removed them in such vast numbers?

If you do not know where the Koalas were originally than how can you recover the species to its former status?

AKF opposes the pervasive myth in the scientific literature that Koalas historically occurred in small numbers. We do not believe this notion.

Ironically this thesis - which does the Koala no service - is derived from a single reference, an anecdotal paper written in 1948 by Harry Parris (Parris HS, 'Koalas on the lower Goulburn', Victorian Naturalist, 64, pp. 192-193, 1948).



Mr. Parris wrote a small paragraph that he thought Aborigines ate Koalas, and kept numbers low. Consequently, Koalas became more prevalent in the 1900s because white Australians had persecuted indigenous Australians.

Mr. Parris was in fact a tram engineer from Melbourne, but the scientific literature which emerged from his paper makes it appear that he was a learned scientist from times gone by. His small and insignificant comment has been regurgitated until it has been accepted.

AKF does not believe that Aboriginal people had such a profound effect on Koalas. AKF believes that the Koala was in robust and significant numbers at white settlement and the greed and economic imperative to exploit nature was in full swing for the next 200 years.

It is time for the past to be re-written more factually and more respectfully to the original custodians of Australia.





Fact Sheet – The Koala Fur Trade

- Koala fur was waterproof, and used to make hats, gloves and fur linings for coats.
- At least 8 million Koalas were killed for their fur between 1888 and 1927.
- Between 1888 and July 1918, at least 4,098,276 Koala furs passed through London auction houses. This figure does not include records from 1911 to 1914.
- Koala was functionally extinct (not enough animals for the population to sustain itself) in South Australia by 1912.
- London was not the only market for Koala furs. Furs were also exported to markets such as the United States of America (USA) and Canada; in 1901, 400,000 furs were shipped from Adelaide to the USA.
- That was just the start: Nearly 2 million furs were exported in 1919, another 2 million in 1924.



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- The Koala fur industry was not halted until President Herbert Hoover of the USA (while he was Secretary for Commerce) signed an order that year (1927) permanently prohibiting the importation of Koala skins into the USA.

- By the 1920s, Koalas reduced to a few hundred individuals in New South Wales and a thousand animals in Victoria. Only Queensland retained significant numbers.
- The catalyst for the end of the fur trade was August 1927 – ‘Black August’ – where nearly 800,000 Koalas were killed in Queensland in one month alone. **800,000 is approximately ten times the size of the current population of Koalas in Australia**

