



**Hinterland
Bush Links**



Good News Story

Koala Habitat Project

Hinterland Bush Links' Koala Habitat project has made significant progress in improving and expanding koala habitat on public and private properties across the Sunshine Coast Hinterland.

We collaborated with 35 landholders to plant 5140 trees within and adjacent to koala habitat areas, revegetating an area of almost 4 hectares and removing invasive weeds from 11.5 hectares of koala habitat. The community has been greatly involved in this project, with most of the revegetation undertaken by community volunteers. We ran a total of 38 volunteer events (22 weeding and 17 tree planting), with an average of 20 volunteers per event. This volunteer input amounted to 1728.5 hours over the course of the project. Through this project, we have noticed several positive outcomes for koalas, biodiversity and the local community.

hinterlandbushlinks.org

Connecting, Restoring and Protecting



Koala habitat planting - Booroobin

Koalas and habitat restoration

Many of our landholders have documented sightings of koalas on their properties: directly seeing koalas, seeing their scat or scratch marks on trees, hearing koalas and capturing imagery on cameras. While we have not done any formal surveys and monitoring as part of this project, it is pleasing to learn that koalas are present in many of the locations we have been working to restore. This provides evidence that our habitat restoration efforts have been done in the right places to benefit local koala populations.

We have seen good progress in the growth of revegetated areas during the project with very high survival rates of trees planted (over 90%). The landholders that we have been collaborating with have been dedicated to maintaining planted areas. We have taken groups of volunteers to some locations to assist with weeding around revegetation sites, which has further helped to give this native vegetation a boost.

The lantana removal we conducted on 20 properties has been an essential part of the habitat restoration process, making a significant difference in reducing weed biomass. This has not only removed impediments to koalas moving across the landscape but has also provided an opportunity for natural regeneration and recruitment to take place, so that native vegetation can thrive in these areas.



Koala and joey - Bald Knob



Lantana clearing - Diamond Valley

Community involvement

The local community, including landholders, volunteers and project partners have been a fundamental part of delivering this project. We have established and built upon existing relationships with private landholders whose commitment to the project outcomes have been critical in realising outcomes for koalas and their habitat. These landholders continue to maintain areas we have planted and weeded for months (and years) after our events and input from contractors.

Working strategically and having good relationships with landholders in particular areas has helped us make a real difference in creating corridors for koalas and other wildlife to move through. In the Reesville area, where there is a known population of koalas, we worked with four landholders whose adjoining properties are in core and priority koala habitat (see map on following page). Collaborating with these landholders, we planted 1040 trees, cleared lantana on two properties and held a volunteer weeding day on one property.

Moreover, this engaged community has been diligently recording sightings on the QWildlife app, helping to inform decision making for future koala conservation efforts. Using the model provided in our landholder's guide for restoring koala habitat, landholders in the Reesville area added to the plantings done by Hinterland Bush Links volunteers, planting an additional 575 trees to further improve outcomes for koalas.

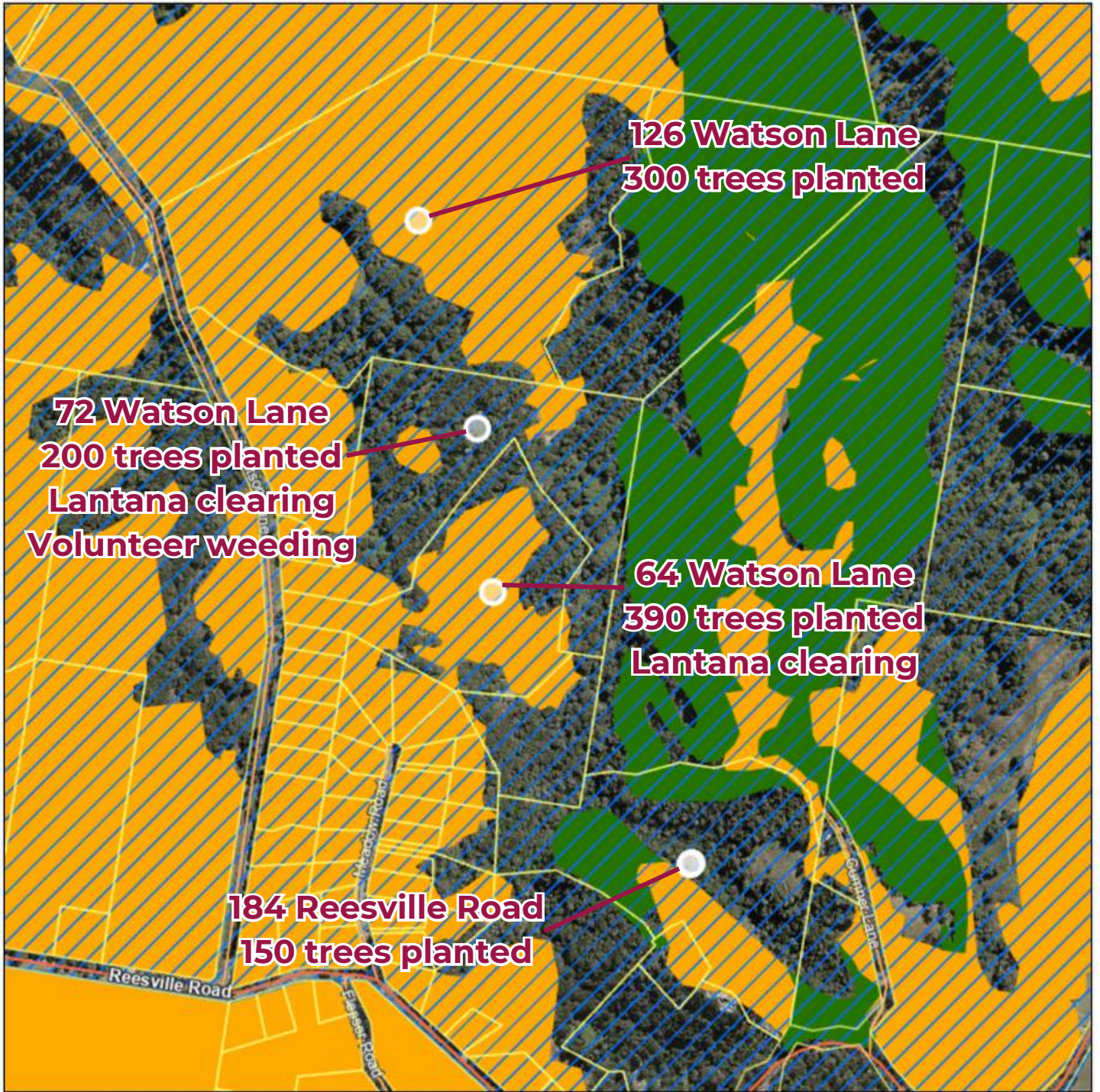


Landholder workshop

Case study: Reesville

26°44'36"S 152°47'48"E

26°44'36"S 152°48'52"E



26°45'33"S 152°47'48"E

26°45'33"S 152°48'52"E

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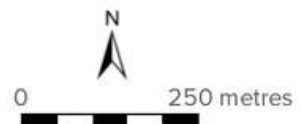
Koala priority area



Core koala habitat area



Koala habitat restoration area



Printed at: A4
Print date: 6/11/2024

Not suitable for accurate measurement.
Projection: Web Mercator EPSG 102100 (3857)
For more information, visit
<https://qldglobe.information.qld.gov.au/help-info/Contact-us.html>



During the Koala Habitat project we broadened our community, welcoming many new landholders and volunteers to work with us. It has been wonderful to connect with so many new people and be able to support a diversity of people to learn and become involved in koala conservation, with volunteers from as young as 3 years old, right through the ages attending our events. Overall, we had over 80 community volunteers involved in the project.

We also collaborated with many other community organisations and local government. This has strengthened our combined capacity to deliver koala conservation initiatives. One partnership which has developed through this project is with Queensland Koala Crusaders. Through getting to know each other's skill sets, we are planning on collaborating more closely in the future, utilising their research and monitoring capabilities and our network of landholders to implement further initiatives on private land to benefit koalas. We also utilised the wealth of knowledge about koalas through collaborating with Vanda Grabowski of Koala Action Inc., who gave a community talk on koalas and reviewed our resource for landholders.



Learning about cultural artefacts from Kerry Jones



Landholder resource: Protecting and restoring koala habitat

Partnering with Sunshine Coast Council throughout the project also provided a basis for further joint efforts in the future. Their Land for Wildlife team provided advice on sites and species for tree planting, we collaborated to plant trees for koala food and habitat at the Council owned Tuan Environmental Reserve, and they spoke at our landholder workshop. We have a close working relationship and now regularly exchange relevant insights and data with each other. Sunshine Coast Council are planning on leveraging our landholder connections to conduct surveys for koala presence and abundance in 2025.

Through collaborating with Bunya Bunya Country Aboriginal Corporation we not only revegetated a large area of habitat for koalas adjacent to Chinaman Creek at Tuan Environmental Reserve and provided employment to a local indigenous group, we also learnt about local indigenous knowledge. At our community tree planting event, volunteers learnt from Kabi Kabi elder Kerry Jones about cultural artefacts that can be found in the area. This was insightful and important to help share cultural knowledge and preserve culturally significant artefacts in the region.



The Roving Restorers volunteer weeding team

We have worked closely with Barung Landcare to deliver many aspects of the project. One critical part they contributed to is growing all the seedlings we have planted. These all originate from locally sourced seeds, which mean that the trees we plant are genetically appropriate for the area. Barung also prepared sites for tree planting events, undertook contracts for lantana removal and tree planting on sites not suitable for volunteers as well as providing input into our landholder guide and speaking at our landholder workshop. This local partnership helped us to tailor our approach to the local area and provides employment for local bush regenerators and nursery staff.

Community involvement

Through this project, we have integrated education into our volunteer events, we published a resource for landholders on koala conservation and habitat restoration and held a landholder workshop on the same theme. We have observed an increase in community awareness of koalas and conservation strategies as well as an increase in capacity to undertake restoration projects. Given that a large proportion of existing koala habitat in the Sunshine Coast Hinterland is on private properties, landholder engagement and participation is crucial and part of the on-going solution to improving the landscape for koalas.

Our education included information about threats to koalas, what to do if you spot one, how to make your property friendly to koalas, trees species that koalas like to eat and live in and research about koala behaviour. We found there was an increase in knowledge about koalas among landholders, a growing concern for koalas and commitment from landholders to improve native vegetation on their properties for koalas. At least three landholders demonstrated this by undertaking further planting adjacent to our planting areas, adding a further 765 trees for koala food and habitat. Other landholders have also undertaken further removal of invasive weeds on their properties, continuing to improve koala habitat quality.



Hinterland Bush Links volunteers, Barung Landcare staff and Bunya Bunya Country Aboriginal Corporation team

We have observed many of our younger volunteers becoming more confident in planting trees and clearing weeds. Two twin volunteers who were five years old when they came to their first tree planting event, watched closely as we demonstrated how to plant a tree. They contributed to the planting of the 200 seedlings for koala food and habitat we planted that day, with their mother commenting on how surprised she was that they were so actively involved.

A year later we returned to the same property to plant a further 500 trees, which gave our volunteers an opportunity to see the growth of so many of the trees they had planted the previous year. Our two young volunteers, now 6 years old, then helped us demonstrate to everyone else how to plant a tree. We noticed that they were mostly self-sufficient in planting trees, remembering their skills from the previous year. It was fantastic to see how we helped build capability within our volunteer community while also seeing the incredible growth of trees in such a short time.



June 2023



May 2024