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Rob Mellett

LOCALS are invited to help discover the lives of one of Australia's most elusive creatures – the short-beaked echidna – at a citizen science workshop in Ipswich next month.

Wildlife Queensland has received \$2,580 from Ipswich City Council to run the program, which will teach residents how to spot and record echidna activity.

Echidnas are notoriously difficult to study. They are largely nocturnal, spend much of the year underground, and can lower their body temperature to just 5°C, effectively “switching off” in hot periods. Camera traps and citizen reports provide the best chance of tracking their movements. Wildlife Queensland ecologist Dr Kate Dutton-Regester said this was the first time echidnas were being formally monitored in Ipswich. She said the city’s rapid growth made the project crucial. “Echidnas rely most heavily on intact bushland with healthy soils where ants and termites are abundant,” she said.

“Unfortunately, those same habitats are often the first to be cleared for housing estates. When bushland is removed, echidnas don’t just lose food sources – they lose the ability to move safely through the landscape, to find mates, and to persist across generations.”

She said connectivity between bushland patches was just as critical.

“When corridors are severed by roads or development, populations become isolated and far more vulnerable to local extinction,” Dr Dutton-Regester said.

One area under pressure is Woogaroo Forest, on the city’s eastern fringe.

“This forest is an important area of habitat for echidnas and many other species,” she said.

“Because of its size it likely supports more consistent populations than smaller bushland fragments. Large remnants like this also act as hubs that link animals across the surrounding landscape. Maintaining them, and the connections to other areas, is critical for the long-term persistence of wildlife in the city.”

Dr Dutton-Regester said there needed to be a rethink regarding how economic growth was balanced with biodiversity.

“An echidna-friendly development policy would prioritise protecting the largest remaining bushland patches and the corridors that link them. Development should be planned around existing habitat, not through it,” she said.

“Infrastructure such as wildlife crossings is essential to make roads safer, and biodiversity-sensitive design – things like fencing that allows wildlife movement, dog management strategies, and buffers between houses and bushland – would all help. “And importantly, it wouldn’t just benefit echidnas.” She warned that governments risked underestimating the urgency because echidnas are still officially listed as “Least Concern”.

“In some urban areas numbers may already be shrinking, but without systematic monitoring it’s invisible. That’s why local initiatives like EchidnaWatch matter so much.”

The next workshop will be held from 9.30am to 11.30am on September 13 at Denmark Hill Conservation Reserve, meeting at the Quarry Street entrance. More information is available via

Echidna Watch on the Wildlife Queensland website, wildlife.org.au.



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