

THE FRESHWATER TURTLE TIMES



1 MILLION TURTLES
COMMUNITY CONSERVATION PROGRAM



Newsletter 3

August 2022

Welcome to the third of our quarterly newsletters. These newsletters provide updates on what you and the program have achieved in the last couple of months.

This edition includes;

- Experiences with the National Nest Predation Survey so far and where to next
- Community group update from Turtles Albury Wodonga
- A summary of a recent Turtle Symposium at the Scientific Meeting of the Australian Society of Herpetologists
- Upcoming opportunities to assist research projects.

1 Million Turtles Community Conservation Program

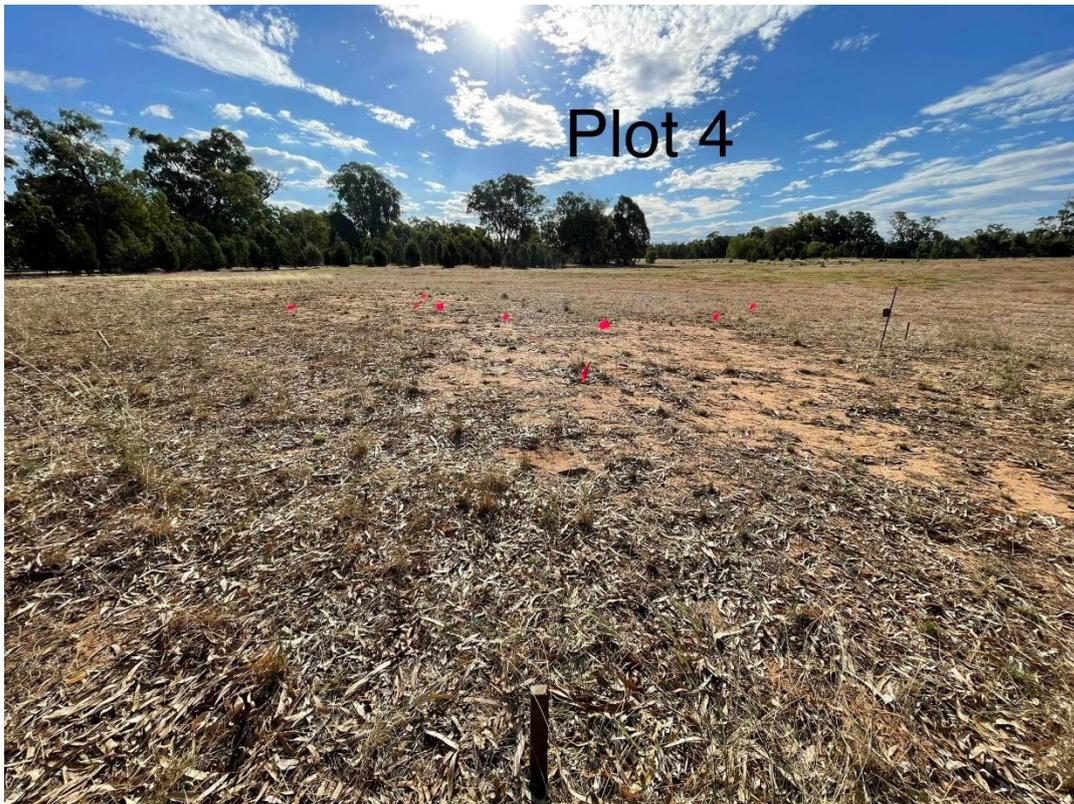
The 1 Million Turtles [team members](#) have been busy attending events to promote the program, talking to community groups, schools and First Nations communities about how we can work together on turtle conservation projects, getting out and about to help set up the National Nest Predation Survey where needed (although the on-line training seems to be setting people up very well to run the survey), and making sure all the on-line resources are in order. Some of us were lucky enough to travel from NSW, VIC, WA and Qld to attend the 2022 Scientific Meeting of the Australian Society of Herpetologists in South Australia (and were able to meet in person for the first time!).

Now it's time to start getting ready for Turtle Month in November 2022.

This project is supported by an Australian Government Citizen Science Grant.



National Nest Predation Experiment



To date, 109 people from across Australia have completed their online training for the National Nest Predation Survey [NNPE Survey \(1millionturtles.com\)](https://1millionturtles.com). The survey has included participation from individuals, university students, community groups, schools and Indigenous ranger crews.

The majority have reported no sign of foxes digging up the eggs within the 3 week window, but please don't get disheartened if this happened to you. This result is very interesting. While many freshwater turtle species nest around November and hatch in autumn, some like the broad shelled turtle (*Chelodina expansa*) have their eggs in the nest over winter. So the lack of foxes digging up nests in the survey is a good sign for this species. Most previous Nest Predation Surveys have been conducted in spring and summer. The lack of fox predation over winter may be a common phenomenon or possibly the wetter than usual seasons in southern and eastern Australia have led to an abundance of other food sources for the foxes that don't require them to dig. More data needed please!!

We encourage anyone who has run one survey in winter to run another at a site close by in spring (but make sure you have a 3 week window before turtles start to nest in November) to see if fox predation picks up in your area as the weather warms.

Apart from your own results, you won't be able to see any others on TurtleSAT just yet. Once more results are posted in we will develop a separate hotspot map within TurtleSAT to display them all.

We have been constantly updating the website with improvements and resources to help you get started with the survey. The list of updates include:

- A NNPS digital training guide. Now, you can download a PDF version with all the information included on the NNPS webpage;
- A NNPS equipment checklist; (to download the e-training guide or the checklist, go to [NNPS webpage](#) and scroll towards the end of page - you will see the 'NNPS Resources' section)
- [A short video that shows you how to enter your NNPS data in TurtleSAT](#); and
- [A short video that demonstrates how to use a trowel to dig artificial nests.](#)

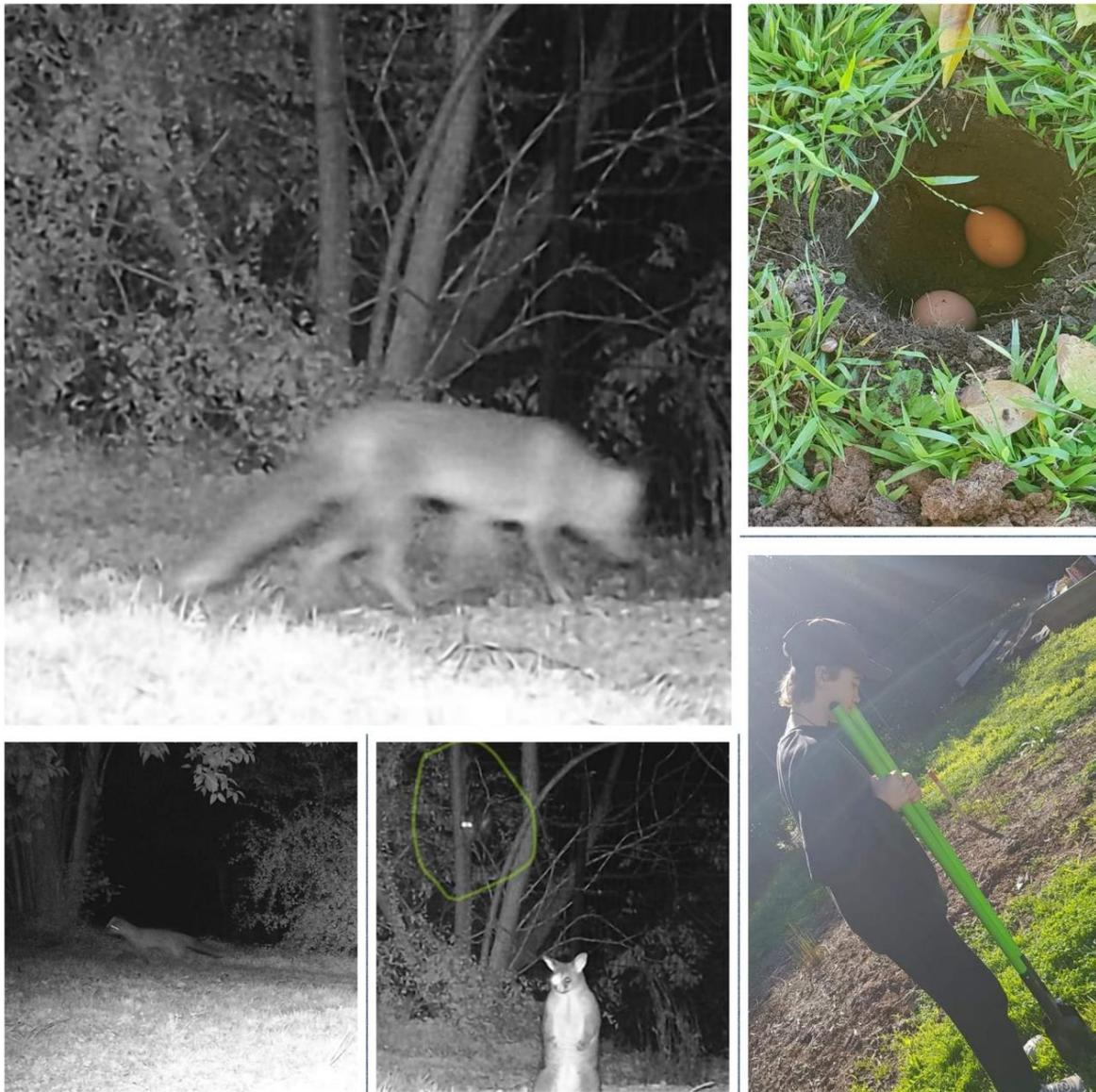
We are also running another couple of National Nest Predation Survey Q & A webinars if you are thinking of starting a survey or have some feedback for us if you have run one already:

Community Information Session. Book here: <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/national-nest-predation-survey-community-information-session-tickets-407772928807>

Land and Natural Resource Management Agencies and Local Councils Information Session. Book here: <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/national-nest-predation-survey-information-session-tickets-407221730157>

Community group update

For the month of July 2022, Turtles Albury Wodonga conducted a nest predation experiment in partnership with the Murray Valley Centre which backs on to Sumsion Gardens Wodonga. Turtles have been documented laying eggs in this location, including the broad shelled turtle (*Chelodina expansa*), which is listed as endangered in Victoria.



We had so much fun setting up fake nests with chicken eggs, which were left untouched for 4 weeks, and monitored with a wildlife camera, recently purchased through a Wettenhall Environmental Trust grant.

Foxes were caught twice on camera towards the beginning of the experiment, but none were seen interacting with the fake nests, which surprised us as that was not what we had anticipated. The camera also picked up neighbouring possums, a crow during the day and a cat came and said hello, though as with the fox, none were caught interacting with the fake nest.

We hope to continue to run these experiments annually, in more locations around the area, maybe trying different eggs or habitats types.

Sharleen Sharp

Turtles Albury Wodonga

Research Update – Turtle Symposium July 2022



Dr Deb Bower leading the turtle symposium.

A congregation of turtle loving folk made their way to Mylor in South Australian for the 55th Scientific Meeting of the Australian Society of Herpetologists. We took the opportunity to meet for a special symposium on 'Successes and Short-comings in Australian Freshwater Turtles Research and Conservation'. Such fun!

The symposium featured eighteen talks on freshwater turtles including an introduction to the current state of turtles and recent advances in technology.

- The University of New England had a contingent speaking about nocturnal basking, new methods to survey baby turtles, and the Bell's Turtle Conservation program.
- La Trobe University featured talks on the movement of Murray River turtles, nest protection, and comparing juvenile ratios in different populations of Murray River turtles.
- From Western Australia, we heard about assisted colonisation in the western Swamp turtle, and success engaging communities to protect turtles around nesting sites.
- Other talks covered taxonomy, recent conservation listings, and the success of community members protecting nesting turtles with fox exclusion fencing.

The efforts of all the 1 Million Turtles citizen scientists was presented by Dr James Van Dyke on behalf of A/Prof Ricky Spencer. He talked about the success of all of our team and all the participants in setting up predation experiments, rescuing turtles off the road, and logging observations.

We concluded the symposium with a robust discussion. Attendees talked about the biases and priorities in freshwater turtle research and conservation. For example, we know some species are declining and need conservation and research attention like the Bellinger River Turtle, whereas for other species like the Northern yellow-faced turtle no research exists at all. We will publish a special issue in the journal *Austral Ecology* early next year detailing outcomes from the symposium and other recent research in freshwater turtle ecology and conservation.

Volunteer Help Wanted!

Researchers are conducting turtle nest and trapping surveys in parts of Victoria, New South Wales, and South Australia this spring and summer. We will be active looking for and protecting turtle nests in November, and then will be doing trapping surveys throughout the summer. This is a great opportunity to get some hands-on experience and training working with wildlife and specifically for protecting turtle nests.



We will mainly be focusing on the following locations this spring/summer:

- Albury/Wodonga (NSW/VIC)
- Bairnsdale, VIC
- Benalla, VIC
- Gunbower, VIC
- Boort, VIC
- Lower Lakes, SA (possibly)

Please contact James Van Dyke at j.vandyke@latrobe.edu.au if you are interested in helping with turtle research at any of these sites and further details can be supplied. Some sites will require induction from grant partners.



We're really keen to share the turtle conservation achievements of groups and individuals around Australia. If you would like to share your group's activities in a future newsletter please let us know via 1millionturtles@1millionturtles.com and include 'newsletter update' in your subject heading.

Find out more:

<https://1millionturtles.com> website with information about the 1 Million Turtles program, the team members who support the project, links to event registrations, videos, training modules, some of the recorded webinars, and more.

Two Facebook pages; [TurtleSAT](#) which provides updates on interesting sightings and community alerts such as red-eared sliders, and [1 Million Turtles](#) which provides general freshwater turtle information, project updates and invitations.

1 Million Turtles Team Contacts

Remember that if you would like one-on-one support from a team member please contact 1 Million Turtles 1millionturtles@1millionturtles.com, include 'Need 1 on 1 support' in the subject heading, provide us with some information on the nature of the assistance you require along with your location and best contact details, and a local contact with be in touch with you.

New South Wales/ACT – Assoc. Professor Ricky Spencer, Ms. Geetha Ortac, Dr. Deb Bower (Armidale area)

Victoria/Tasmania - Dr. James Van Dyke (and NSW Riverina)

South Australia - Dr. Sylvia Clarke, Professor Mike Thompson

Western Australia - Mr. Anthony Santoro

Queensland – Ms. Marilyn Connell, Dr. Deb Bower

Northern Territory - Dr. Deb Bower

