

THE FRESHWATER TURTLE TIMES



1 MILLION TURTLES
COMMUNITY CONSERVATION PROGRAM



Newsletter 1

February 2022

Welcome to the first of our quarterly newsletters. In this edition we include an update on what you and the project have achieved so far, upcoming opportunities in 2022 and a community group activity update.

The amount of interest and support for freshwater turtle conservation across Australia is really overwhelming. It is the community connection with freshwater turtles and local conservation actions that will make the long term survival of these species a reality.

While Covid has unfortunately restricted the face-to-face workshops originally planned, the switch to online webinars and training videos has enabled the project to reach a much wider audience.

Please remember that if you would like one-on-one support from a team member please contact your local 1 Million Turtles team member.

1 Million Turtles Team Contacts

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



1 Million Turtles Community Conservation Program

The 1 Million Turtles citizen science project has got off to a great start. Now we have a dedicated website <https://1millionturtles.com> 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.

We also have 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.

We encourage everyone to follow these Facebook pages and take a look at the website.

Important partnerships have been strengthened with– Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife, Murdoch University (WA), Nature Glenelg Trust, NSW Saving Our Species, Mary River Turtle Conservation/Tiaro & District Landcare, Riverglades Group, Turtles Albury-Wodonga, Turtles Australia Inc, Wetland Habitats (Paiwalla) Association Inc, WIRES, and many others. We thank you for your support.

Turtle Month 2021 Wrap Up

Turtle Month in November 2021 was a wonderful whirlwind of activity.

It started on 1 November with the official launch webinar for the 1 Million Turtles citizen science project featuring excellent speakers and special guests – a recording can be accessed here:

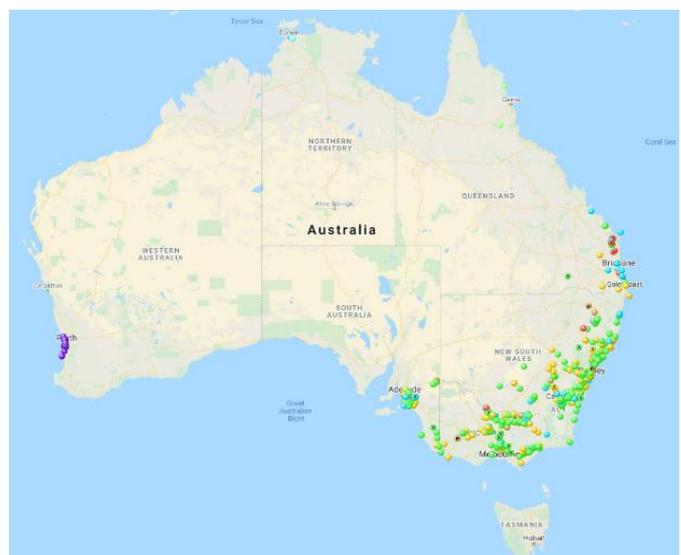
<https://1millionturtles.com/launch-event>

This was followed by a range of location specific webinars and talks targeting areas of Australia where more knowledge about turtle ecology and conservation needs is required. Thank you to all the experts who presented and all the wonderful audience members.

The improved community awareness created by these events, plus traditional media and social media promotion of Turtle Month, resulted in 1500 new records on TurtleSAT, 467 turtles saved crossing roads, and approximately 4300 eggs protected through nest protection efforts. Some invasive red-eared slider turtle records that came in through TurtleSAT resulted in quick action to control this pest. This is an amazing effort and this is what Turtle Month is all about.



TurtleSAT records Nov 2020 - Jan 2021



TurtleSAT records Nov 2021 - Jan 2022



Some of the photos submitted with recent TurtleSAT records.

The data for turtle and nest sightings are used by the project team to look for nesting hotspots so these sites can be revisited to protect next season's nests.

This [5 minute citizen science video](#) gives an insight into the positive impact you are having when you rescue a turtle trying to cross the road. The [1 Million Turtles](#) website has some tips on how to [safely move turtles found on roads](#).

We also promoted a turtle related summer holiday treasure hunt for people staying near waterways. The hunt encouraged them to spend some time looking for nesting sites identified by broken shells and shallow digging occurring together. Thank you to all those who participated, we got useful data on important nesting locations.

We encourage you to keep an eye out for nests whenever you are near a waterway. While most species nest around November, in the Murray-Darling catchment the broad-shelled turtles (*Chelodina expansa*) will be nesting now through until mid-April. Here is a video to show you what to look out for when searching for evidence of nests. www.youtube.com/watch?v=vjHAW349vII

TurtleSAT app

A recent addition to the [TurtleSAT](#) app has improved the functionality and enabled people to record 'absences' when they specifically look for nests but don't find any. This is really useful information for the project.

There are more updates to come including the ability to use the app off-line in locations without phone reception, so you won't have to put these records in through the website when you're back in range.

A [Citizen Science Hub](#) has been created at the Australian Reptile Park. This initiative will help people to learn how to use TurtleSAT while walking around the reptile park so they can feel confident to use it collect information at their local waterways.

Nest predation experiment - STAY TUNED FOR UPCOMING START DATE

The first round of the 1 Million Turtles Nest Predation Experiment is planned to start in February/March 2022. This will involve people burying chicken eggs and revisiting the site to monitor how quickly the eggs were dug up. Trail cameras can also be installed to identify who is eating the eggs. This will give us an indication of how high fox predation rates are across the country.

We are keen to have as many people involved as possible in this experiment. We want people to bury eggs near a waterway in likely turtle habitat, or somewhere a long way from water to provide a comparison. The sites chosen will need to be on private land where permission has been granted or working in partnership with the relevant local authority on public land.

We are still waiting for final ethics approval for this scientific research method from Western Sydney University before we can begin. We hope to have this in place by mid-February. Part of the ethics approval process requires everyone joining the experiment to undertake a short on-line training module and quiz.

Participants can be involved many times over multiple locations or keep it simple by undertaking the experiment at just one location. It's a good idea to contact one of the project team so they can help work out what is the best option for you or your group. We hope to have many people and sites involved in the experiment, as it will give us a better understanding of the impact of nest predation on freshwater turtles.

As soon as the experiment is ready to begin, we will make direct contact with those who have expressed an interest in being involved. Please contact your local state 1 Million Turtles team representative (listed above) if you're keen to join the experiment.

Community group update

Mary River Turtle Conservation – Tiaro Landcare, by Marilyn Connell

The endangered Mary River turtle (*Elusor macrurus*) inhabits just one river, the Mary River in South-east Queensland. Nesting commences on the arrival of October spring rains. The Tiaro Landcare team conducted early morning patrols of known nesting banks searching for newly laid nests. Over 20 nests were individually protected. Where possible, the nests are left in-situ so that incubation and hatching can occur as it has occurred for eons. However, in late October many nests had to be carefully relocated higher up on the riverbank due to threat of inundation by rising floodwaters. Fortunately, most clutches had hatched prior to the massive 21m flood that occurred on 7 Jan 2022.



Do you know a hatchling Mary River turtle weighs the same as a teaspoon of sugar??

The nest protection program has successfully increased survivorship of the egg/hatchling life cycle phase of the Mary River turtle. However, a populations study found few immature turtles in the river suggesting the species faces other threats in the river.

To learn more about conservation of this unique Australian turtle visit Tiaro Landcare's website www.tiarolandcare.org.au/maryriverturtle/ or Facebook page www.facebook.com/MaryRiverTurtleProjectTiaraLandcare

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.

