

THE FRESHWATER TURTLE TIMES

1 MILLION TURTLES COMMUNITY CONSERVATION PROGRAM UPDATES,
RESEARCH INSIGHTS AND MORE



Photo Credit: Dr Donald McKnight

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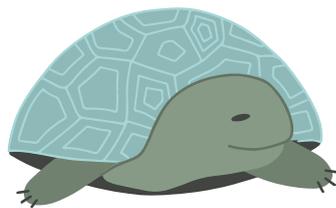
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Happy World Day Everyone!

Thursday May 23rd is World Turtle Day. A day created by American Tortoise Rescue to celebrate and protect turtles and tortoises and their disappearing habitats around the world.

We are taking this occasion to place the spotlight on our future turtle conservationists. We have a wonderful sub-set of teaching resources that are now available through the 1 Million Turtles website - <https://1millionturtles.com/world-turtle-day-1>. Full set will be available shortly.

They are aimed at students in Stage 3 (Year 5/6) and cover important topics related to freshwater turtle ecology, threats and conservation. Each lesson also includes background information and hands-on activities. We are hoping teachers around Australia will help get the turtle conservation message to our young people, the next generation of turtle enthusiasts and protectors.



WORLD
turtle
-DAY-

We wish you a Happy World Turtle Day!

We encourage you to share stories from this newsletter, share our Facebook posts, and share your own local turtle stories. Share the love for turtles!



Updates: 1 Million Turtles Community Conservation Program

The Australian Government Citizen Science Grant that was awarded to the 1 Million Turtles team 3 years ago (how time has flown!) has enabled this national turtle community conservation program to reach some pretty incredible milestones, in particular the impressive number of turtle and nest records on TurtleSAT and the many people and organisations we have connected with and that have connected with each other.

Part of the grant money was allocated to run a workshop in Albury Wodonga in March to bring together the groups and individuals from across Australia who have been working closely with and directly supporting the 1 Million Turtles program in the last 3 years. This event provided an opportunity to share their achievements and any challenges they had experienced in implementing our program activities. This is a very important outcome for the next steps of the 1 Million Turtles program.



We heard so many wonderful stories of people's turtle conservation achievements. You can read one from Lake Alexandra in NSW below.

One of the key pieces of feedback we received at the end of the workshop, apart from the value all participants found in connecting with and learning from each other, was that more of this type of event was wanted. We very much hope in the future to be able to deliver a similar national workshop and get the wider freshwater turtle community involved.

If anyone would also like to organise a state or regionally based turtle workshop, please let us know. We would be happy to support this in any way we can.

With the grant funding ending we are also exploring a range of opportunities to enable this national freshwater turtle community conservation program to continue to operate sustainably into the future. If anyone has any ideas for 1 Million Turtles going forward, please reach out to us on 1millionturtlesprogram@gmail.com

TurtleSAT updates



TurtleSAT

TurtleSAT is not just a fantastic archive of turtle sightings, nest locations, and conservation actions. It is also a mechanism to alert others when turtles are under significant threat.

This has become very apparent recently with the drying out of lakes in Western Australia. The record-breaking hot dry summer experienced by Perth has meant that many of the lakes that provide important habitat for the southwestern snake-necked turtle in WA are dry, with some so dry that they can be walked across. At Bibra Lake in Perth's southern suburbs, Saving Our Snake-Necked Turtle (SOSNT) volunteers surveyed approximately 30% of the lake and recorded 93 turtles that had been aestivating in the mud and were dug up and killed by foxes. Turtle ecologist and SOSNT project lead, Dr Anthony Santoro, has since surveyed all accessible areas of the lake (~85%) and found nine more.

There is potential for more deaths in the future, however much of the remaining lake area is inaccessible to foxes due to the deep and muddy substrate. While it is likely that a similar situation is occurring at other Perth lakes, Anthony Santoro has also surveyed several other lakes in the past week with minimal mortality observed. Lakes in urban settings unfortunately don't allow the turtles to safely move to another waterbody when conditions become unsuitable. This situation demonstrates the devastating combined impacts of climate change, urbanisation and fox predation on these turtles. The Saving Our Snake-Necked Turtle program are asking people to keep an eye out at other drying lakes around Perth and report findings both on TurtleSAT and to sosnt@murdoch.edu.au. Hatchlings may also be observed in the coming weeks and should be taken to WA Wildlife if the closest wetland is dry.

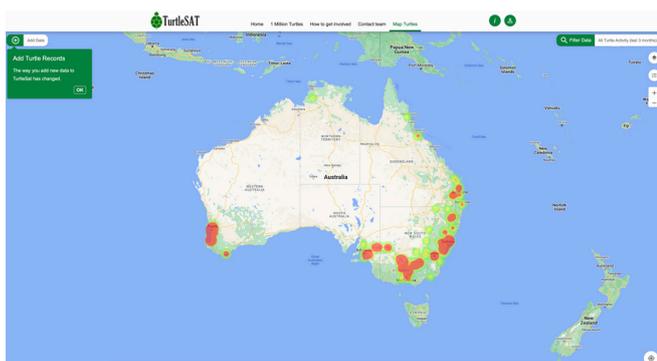
Read more here: **Murdoch University News Story**

<https://www.murdoch.edu.au/news/articles/turtles-easy-prey-for-foxes-victims-of-perth-s-hot-summer>

Dr Ricky Spencer has also shared a video on social media to highlight the situation and ask for help. <https://fb.watch/rVdYDxilYf/>

In happier TurtleSAT news, there is now an agreement in place between TurtleSAT and CSIRO's national publicly accessible biodiversity database the Atlas of Living Australia to share turtle data across the two platforms, strengthening the usefulness of both for turtle conservation into the future.

Useful TurtleSAT Tip - Making sure the location of your TurtleSAT entry is correct



Entering data while logged into TurtleSAT is highly recommended. Doing this means you don't need to enter an email address to submit the record, it allows you to see all your data together and means you can edit your submissions.

This is particularly useful if for whatever reason the mapping part of the app places your record in the wrong place or you make a mistake when manually enter coordinates. Without correct locational data the usefulness of the records for turtle conservation action are very limited.

If you have data entered to TurtleSAT through your account, please check the locations are as correct as possible.

To do this:

1. Login to TurtleSAT
2. Select the 'Filter Data' option (located in the top right of the screen)
3. Scroll to the 'By submitter' section and select 'My Data'
4. Scroll to the bottom and select 'View Map'
5. Only your data should be visible now, and you can check that each dot is in the approximate right location (i.e. not in the ocean or the centre of WA)

6. If any of your data has an incorrect location, click on the dot
7. Select 'Edit Record' at the bottom of the pop up
8. Change the location details (and anything else that might be incorrect). You can click on the dot to move it to correct location on the map, or manually correct the coordinates.
9. Scroll to the bottom and click 'Update'

Thanks in advance.

National Nest Predation Survey

We are still very keen for more data on fox impacts on nests. For more information on how to get involved:

<https://1millionturtles.com/nnp-survey>

If you have any questions about data entry or other queries please email:

1millionturtlesprogram@gmail.com



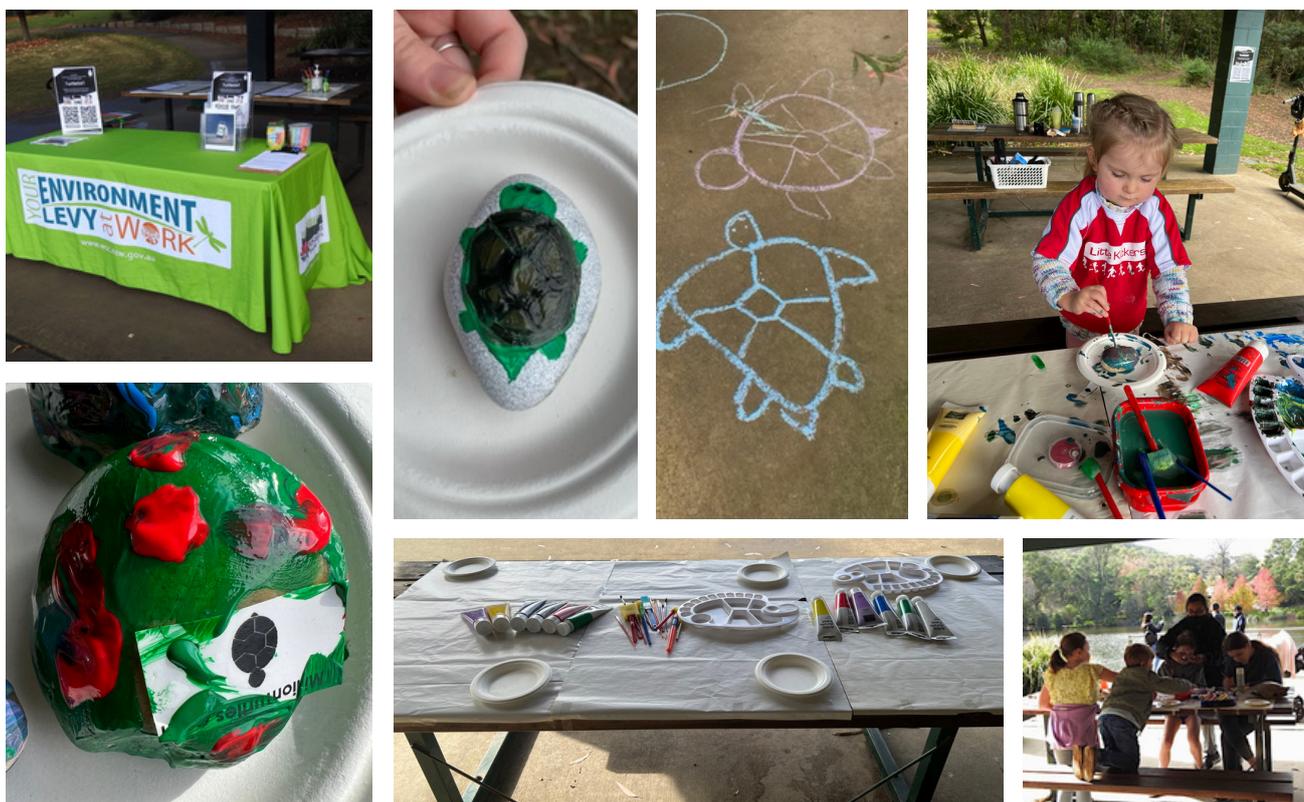
Spotlight on community turtle conservation: Lake Alexandra NSW



Volunteer Helen Erskine has been actively working with Associate Professor Ricky Spencer from University of Western Sydney and Patrick Tegart from Wingecarrabee Shire Council to educate the local community about the freshwater turtles of Lake Alexandra. This small lake is in the Mittagong Township, about halfway between Sydney and Canberra. 140 years ago it was a dam supplying water for engines taking coal to the Fitzroy iron mines, and it is now home to Eastern long neck (*Chelodina longicollis*) and Murray River short neck (*Emydura macquarii*) turtles.

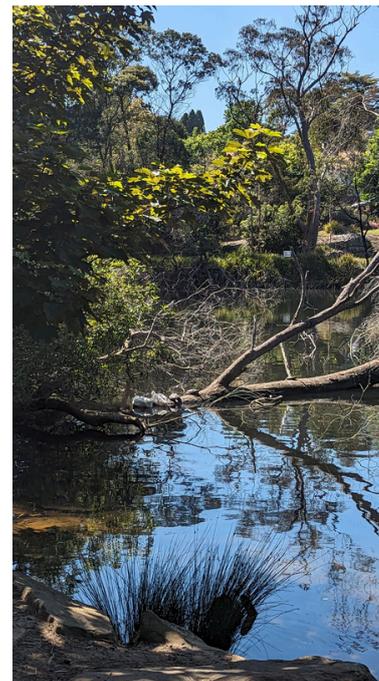
To improve the turtle habitat basking platforms, and a turtle island for safer nesting, have recently been installed at the lake. A 'Turtle Tour' of 5 educational signs has also been created. The signs are taken down throughout late autumn and winter to be replaced in spring, to focus the community's attention when the females are finding nesting places.

Helen has also been instrumental in running events with Ricky Spencer and the local Council to actively engage the local community with turtle rock painting and chalk art sessions for children, Walk and Talks, and setting up National Nest Predation Survey plots and wildlife cameras at the lake. This has all led to a growing interest and awareness of the protected species, including many people coming especially to see the turtles on the logs or swimming at the lake.



As a citizen scientist, Helen often speaks to interested people and shows them the TurtleSAT app as she does a turtle survey at the lake. Some go on to add the app to their phones and many are quick to tell her what they have seen; turtles on the local roads, turtles returned to the Lake (even if they didn't come from there) and some nesting in close proximity (including in backyards).

University of Western Sydney student Letisha Hopton conducted a survey of visitors to the lake before and after they completed the self-guided 'Turtle Tour'. The survey looked at the knowledge and attitude of the participant towards freshwater turtles, with 6 questions being kept identical in the before and after survey. The responses showed a definite increase in the knowledge of participants after taking the tour. Everyone who completed the survey also responded that they would be interested in helping with conservation work and agreed that the walk would be good to share with family and friends.



Can you spot the turtles?

Lake Alexandra Turtle Tour



What is the Turtle Tour?
This initiative is a self-paced tour designed to provide information about turtles and how to become a citizen scientist. The initiative has been put together by the 1 Million Turtles Community Conservation Program and Wingecarribee Shire Council.

Why Turtles?
Turtles are an important species for our waterways and wetlands. They act as a vacuum to help maintain the health of a waterways. Unfortunately, turtle populations are rapidly declining due to predation and loss of habitat. By becoming a citizen scientist you can help build our understanding about turtles and their threats.

How to get involved?
Become a citizen scientist and help with research and future conservation efforts.

1. Download TurtleSAT app.
2. Register an account.
3. Visit each of the Turtle Tour Stops around the lake to learn more about freshwater turtles and to records your turtle observations.



As you walk around the lake, keep an eye out for signs and QR codes. At each of these locations you will learn more about freshwater turtles and their behaviour. See map for Turtle Tour stops around the lake.



Letisha also noted a 294% increase in the number of TurtleSAT entries at Lake Alexandra in the 12 months after signage was installed, and a large increase number of entries completed by people who had created a new TurtleSAT account.

‘Our Turtles’, as Helen calls them, have given a new focus to Lake Alexandra and its human neighbours. People are now more aware and vocal about their concerns for the species and a will to keep the turtles safe. They avoid driving over where they nest, and go more slowly around the perimeter of the lake to protect turtles, ducks and other wildlife too.

This is a very impressive effort from everyone involved at Lake Alexandra, and Helen’s dedication to educating and empowering the local community of all ages, is to be congratulated!

<https://1millionturtles.com/turtles-of-lake-alexandra>

Have a Story?

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 1millionturtlesprogram@gmail.com and include 'newsletter update' in your subject heading.

And don't forget to **tag us @1millionturtles** on Facebook if you are sharing your turtle photos, activities and stories.

To Find Out More

Visit our 1 Million Turtles <https://1millionturtles.com> website for more information about the 1 Million Turtles program, the team members who support the project, videos, training modules, some of the recorded webinars, and more.

We also have two Facebook pages; (1) [TurtleSAT](#) which provides updates on interesting sightings and community alerts such as red-eared sliders, and (2) [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 1millionturtlesprogram@gmail.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.



NSW/ACT - Assoc. Professor Ricky Spencer, Ms. Geetha Ortac, Dr Deb Bower (Armidale area)



VIC/TAS- Assoc. Professor James Van Dyke (and NSW Riverina)



SA - Dr Sylvia Clarke, Professor Mike Thompson



WA - Dr Anthony Santoro



QLD - Ms Marilyn Connell, Assoc. Professor Deb Bower



NT - Assoc. Professor Deb Bower