

Case Study: WildThings bees and biodiversity program

COUNCIL NAME

Ku-ring-gai Council

WEB ADDRESS

kmc.nsw.gov.au

POPULATION

122,859

Overview

Ku-ring-gai Council's 'WildThings' is a hive placement program for *Tetragonula carbonaria*, a stingless native bee. The program is leading to increasing *Tetragonula carbonaria* populations and enhanced urban biodiversity with 1000 bee hives delivered to Ku-ring-gai residents.

Background

The stingless native bee *Tetragonula carbonaria* occurs naturally in Sydney. As Sydney undergoes urban consolidation and more trees are removed, *Tetragonula* are suffering from habitat loss. The native bee hive placement program was created to enhance Ku-ring-gai's local biodiversity.

The program strongly correlates with the community's vision, values and objectives in the Community Strategic Plan 2030, supports operational plan tasks in Council's Delivery Program 2013-2017 and Operational Plan 2016-2017, Biodiversity Policy 2016, Fauna Management Policy 2016 and is funded through Council's environmental levy.

The objectives of the WildThings native bee hive placement program are to:

1. Increase the *Tetragonula carbonaria* population, both in the Ku-ring-gai LGA and Sydney metropolitan area, and therefore enhance local biodiversity
2. Facilitate the pollination of local plants and food crops through increased populations of *Tetragonula carbonari*, both in the Ku-ring-gai LGA and Sydney metropolitan area
3. Deliver a community engagement program that reinforces a positive relationship between people and the natural environment
4. Facilitate behavioural change within the community to benefits the local environment
5. Develop a self-funding project model to ensure the continued growth and sustainability of the WildThings program.

Implementation

Distribution of native bee hives to Ku-ring-gai residents

Bee hives are available to Ku-ring-gai residents or can be purchased.

Volunteer engagement / bee hive splitting season

To reduce program costs and cater for the program's popularity and growth, Council staff learned how to 'split' an existing bee hive, to create two bee hives. The introduction of bee hive splitting has grown the program from four bee hives in 2005 to over 1,000 bee hives in 2016.

Delivery of annual event series

The annual WildThings educational event series offers a series of workshops and talks primarily on Ku-ring-gai's native fauna and creating/protecting fauna habitat, and includes details on the native bee hive placement program.



REFERENCES

www.wildthings.org.au/index.php/programs-2/native-bees

Community outreach

Council's YouTube channel 'Envirotube' and Wildthings.org.au educates a broader audience on the program, promotes Ku-ring-gai's native bee hive placement program and showcases Ku-ring-gai's biodiversity.



Outcomes

From January 2016 to May 2017 the program achieved the following:

- Distribution of 121 hives to local Ku-ring-gai residents
- 126 hives sold outside of the Ku-ring-gai LGA, raising \$58,700 to fund the continuation of the WildThings program
- Program milestone of over 1,000 bee hives placed around Sydney, 340 hives checked
- 281 hives split, involving 20 volunteers who contributed 480 hours to the program
- Delivery of 10 WildThings events (talks or workshops), with 354 participants
- Production of 11 Envirotube videos, receiving 7,734 views (total visits currently 301,000)
- 6,620 unique visits to wildthings.org.au and 682 active WildThings members

Key Learnings

A number of challenges have been identified and addressed to ensure the ongoing success of the program including:

- Keeping bee hives alive during periods of extreme temperature by developing the use of insulated cladding a unique adaptation to Ku-ring-gai's bee hive design
- Council is continually trialling new defensive measures against the small hive beetle which is killing 15-20 hives each year
- Council has pioneered the concept of brood transfers to hives that are still alive but lack a Queen bee and a bee-hive splitting technique, the "upside down" split which eliminates slumping, a problem that occasionally kills a newly split hive

Contact

Name: Peter Clarke

Position: Community Volunteer Programs Coordinator

Phone: 02 9424 0618

Email: wildthings@kmc.nsw.gov.au

This project was the 2017 winner of the Communication, Education and Empowerment Award at the LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards