



**Australian
Koala
Foundation**

A.C.N. 010 922 102

New research: at least 4 million Koala skins sent to London early last century

24th August 2015

Australian Koala Foundation (AKF) research has revealed at least 8 million Koalas were killed for the fur trade, with their pelts shipped to London, United States and Canada between 1888 and 1927.

The AKF's research sourced its figures from historic auction house records, news archives and other published works, but is looking to citizens of the UK for more information.

Chief Executive of the AKF, Deborah Tabart, said that Koala fur is waterproof, and was used to make hats and gloves and to line coats.

"Imagine if there are still people who have information about this dreadful trade?" Ms Tabart said.

"Maybe you have a piece of Koala fur or item of clothing from this time, it's all part of the jigsaw puzzle."

Ms Tabart said Australia's Koala fur trade completely decimated wild populations.

The current population of approximately 87,000 wild Koalas in Australia represents only 1 per cent of those that were shot for the fur trade.

The AKF said this new research will be vitally important when it comes to regenerating Koala populations around the country in the future.

"Where did they thrive before European settlers came?" she said.

"Between 1888 and July 1918 our records show that at least 4,098,276 Koala furs passed through London auction houses," she said.

"This figure doesn't include records from 1911 to 1914.

"London wasn't the only market – records we've obtained indicate more than 400,000 pelts were shipped in 1901 alone from Adelaide to the USA.

"In 1919, 2 million pelts were shipped to the USA, followed by another 2 million in 1924."



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Ms Tabart said this slaughter saw Koalas hunted to functional extinction in South Australia by 1912.

“By the 1920s, Koalas were reduced to a few hundred individuals in New South Wales and 1000 in Victoria,” she said.

It wasn't until USA's then Secretary for Commerce Herbert Hoover, who later became President, signed an order in 1927 permanently prohibiting Koala skin importation, that the Koala fur trade was halted.

If you have any information about the Koala fur trade, please contact akf@savethekoala.com.

Key Facts & Figures

- Koala fur was waterproof, and used to make hats, gloves and fur linings for coats.
- At least 8 million Koalas were killed for their fur between 1888 and 1927.
- Between 1888 and July 1918, at least 4,098,276 Koala furs passed through London auction houses. This figure does not include records from 1911 to 1914.
- Koala was functionally extinct in South Australia by 1912 (not enough animals for the population to sustain itself).
- London was not the only market for Koala furs. Furs were also exported to markets such as the United States of America (USA) and Canada; in 1901, 400,000 furs were shipped from Adelaide to the USA.
- That was just the start: Nearly 2 million furs were exported in 1919, another 2 million in 1924.
- By the 1920s, Koalas reduced to a few hundred individuals in New South Wales and a thousand animals in Victoria. Only Queensland retained significant numbers.
- The catalyst for the end of the fur trade was August 1927 – ‘Black August’ – where nearly 800,000 Koalas were killed in Queensland in one month alone. 800,000 is approximately ten times the size of the current population of Koalas in Australia
- The Koala fur industry was not halted until President Herbert Hoover of the USA (while he was Secretary for Commerce) signed an order that year (1927) permanently prohibiting the importation of Koala skins into the USA.

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