

Quarterly Koala Report for February 2015

Myall Koala & Environment Group



(Photo: Ian Morphet)

Koala Losses

As previously reported, another koala was hit by a car near the Jean Shaw Koala Reserve in January. This is the third fatality in Kingfisher Avenue in the past 12 months. In addition, another koala died from unknown causes during the year bringing the total deaths to four in twelve months. A year ago we estimated that our koala numbers had slowly grown to about 22 animals from a low of 12 in 1999 when the population was declared “endangered” by the NSW Scientific Committee. Losing more than 18% of our population in one year is a major setback. It is worth stating that the number of koalas is very much an estimate because we don’t have the resources or expertise to do a scientific study.

One bright spot is that there have been sightings of perhaps 5 mothers with babies around Hawks Nest this summer, which is the same as the last two years.

To address the issue of car hits along Kingfisher Avenue and Ibis Avenue, we have been in discussion with Great Lakes Council to do something in the way of traffic calming measures to ensure that vehicles don’t exceed the speed limit of 50KPH along this stretch. Possible measures that may be introduced include additional signage, flashing warning lights in low light and after dark, double lines, large koala images on the roadway, colouring or stripes on the roadway, ripple strips or even speed humps.

In the meantime, some of you may have noted that the Koala Group has attached some coloured reflective strips to all the koala signs to help increase their visibility at night.

We ask everyone to PLEASE not exceed the speed limit along this stretch of roadway because it is very common for koalas to cross the road in this area.

Easter Stall

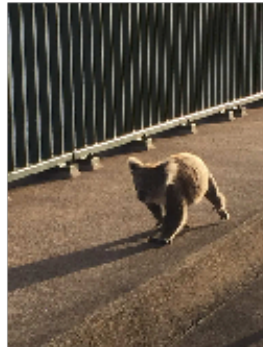
The Koala Group is again having an Easter stall on Saturday 4 April outside Hawks Nest Newsagency selling cakes, and bric-a-brac. For the four Saturdays beforehand we will be selling raffle tickets in Hawks Nest and Tea Gardens.

Thank you to those who rang to report their koala sightings on the Hotline answering machine (4997 0878). To get help for any sick or injured wildlife, call Native Animal Trust Fund on 0418 628 483 (0418 NATIVE). Calls for koalas, turtles, penguins, echidnas and platypus are usually referred on to us. If anyone would like a free fridge magnet including the Koala Hotline and NATF phone numbers, they are available from the Visitor Information Centre, Hawks Nest Post Office and Hawks Nest Pharmacy (or give us a call).

Gail & Ian Morphet (4997 1550)
Myall Koala & Environment Group

Quarterly Koala Report for August 2015

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(Photo: Jasmine Elstermann)

Koala Working Group (KWG)

The annual meeting of the Koala Working Group was held this month in Tea Gardens. The KWG is a committee, chaired by Mat Bell Senior Ecologist with Great Lakes Council, charged with the responsibility of administering the Recovery Plan for the Hawks Nest/Tea Gardens endangered koala population. The committee includes representatives from the Koala Group, the Office of Environment and Heritage Threatened Species Unit, the Great Lakes office of National Parks and Wildlife Service, the NSW Crownlands Department, and Great Lakes Council's Strategic Planning and Natural Systems Departments. The main discussions at this meeting centred around the unfortunate combination of three recent events affecting our koalas; namely the deaths of three koalas on Kingfisher Avenue from car hits, the recently introduced RFS 10/50 Rule resulting in dozens of trees in Hawks Nest being needlessly removed and the major storm in April that resulted in more loss of trees.

Actions from the meeting to address these issues include proposals to erect a speed sensitive sign in Kingfisher Avenue to ask speeding drivers to slow down, affixing large koala images on the roadway to highlight the koala corridor, two additional signs in the towns advising the community of the current koala status, commencing a street tree planting program on street verges where there are no power lines or water mains and enhancing the John Davis Memorial Avenue of Trees in Sanderling Avenue with more mature trees.

We ask everyone to PLEASE not exceed the speed limit along Kingfisher Avenue because it is very common for koalas to cross the road in this area.

Wildside Festival

The Festival is on again this year from Friday 11 September to Sunday 13th. Activities include Golf on the Wildside; Spotlighting, Koala and wildflower walks; wildlife rescue, weeds and koala talks; face painting and kids games; displays by Arts & Crafts, RFS, GLC, Galleries in the Gardens, NPWS and Native Animal Trust Fund; stalls by Lionesses, Red Cross, Newcastle Native Plant Society; performances by the School & Community Band, St Josephs School Choir and Tea Gardens Ukestra; Lions Club sausage sizzle. Come along and enjoy the natural environment of Hawks Nest in springtime.

Don't forget to report your koala sightings on our Hotline answering machine (4997 0878). To get help for any sick or injured wildlife, call Native Animal Trust Fund on 0418 628 483 (0418 NATIVE).

Gail & Ian Morphet (4997 1550), Myall Koala & Environment Group

Quarterly Koala Report for November 2015

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Princess's Capture
(Photo: Ian Morphet)



Three Years Later (see ear tag)
(Photo: Paul Caddy)

Princess

Sometimes our Group gets to follow the life and times of a particular koala. This story is about Princess, a lady first identified by us when her baby needed to be taken into care from the Swan Bay area of Hawks Nest in 2009. Sadly, the baby died of an unidentified illness but when the carers asked to see its mother to see if it had any issues, we had to capture her. This was no easy task because she was high up in a Swamp Mahogany tree. We had to bring in a special fence to surround the tree with the only way out being into a possum trap. Princess was judged to be in perfect health and she was returned to Swan Bay with a green tag in her right ear. Since then, she has been sighted many times and we know that she has had at least three babies since 2009, including one last year. Last year she moved out of Swan Bay and was seen with her baby in Kurrawong Avenue. During his search for koalas for his Wildside Festival walks this year, Christian Patteson spotted her in Mermaid Avenue and photographed her with her green ear tag.

Hunter Koala Forum

Our President Jill Madden and Koala Group Committee members Peter Madden , Gail and Ian Morphett attended a forum at Newcastle University to discuss the plight of koalas in the Hunter region, particularly the Port Stephens area. Speakers at the forum included, Tim Roberts from the Tom Farrell Institute for the Environment, Sue Swain Vice President of the Hunter Koala Preservation Society, Damian Higgins from the Koala Health Hub at Sydney University, Don Hudson a vet from the Noahs Ark Vet Clinic, Brian Tracey from University of Western Sydney and John Clulow from Newcastle Uni. Many topics were covered including the dramatic decline in koala numbers in Port Stephens, loss of urban habitat trees, broken movement corridors, illnesses such as Cryptococcosis, Koala Retro Virus and Chlamydia, road kills and dog attacks. Everyone at the forum agreed that the local koala population needs to be declared "endangered" to increase the focus on protecting them. However, the lack of accurate historic and current koala population data makes it difficult to convince the NSW Scientific Committee. Funding needs to be obtained to carry out radio tracking of the local koala population. All areas of the state, including us in Hawks Nest/Tea Gardens, struggle with the same problem of the inability to accurately understand their koala populations.

Koala Sightings

Sightings of koalas so far this spring (September-November) has been down on last year – 51 compared to 71 last year. Also, sightings of mothers with babies are significantly down from four to only one or two. You may have noticed our advertisements in the newspapers over the past three months. We thank all those who have rung our Koala Sightings Hotline on 4997 0878 to report their koala encounters.

Gail & Ian Morphett (4997 1550), Myall Koala & Environment Group