

# **Quarterly Koala Report for February 2016**

## **Myall Koala & Environment Group**



Jye in Care  
(Photo: Sue Swain)



Jye's Release  
(Photo: Sue Swain)

### **Battle for Territory**

A fascinating story of male koala rivalry occurred in Hawks Nest early in this long hot summer. On Thursday 10 December (a 38 deg day) two male koalas were having a dispute in a Swamp Mahogany tree 10 metres above the ground in Carinya Close. They had been fighting for two hours when the larger of the two, forced the younger, smaller boy so far out on a branch that it finally broke under their combined weight and they both fell to the ground. The larger male got up and ran off. However, the smaller one, who appeared to be dazed, staggered to the house next door and collapsed. The residents called Native Animal Trust Fund wildlife rescue and Ian Morphett was called to see if he needed attention. He was collected and taken to a Hunter Koala Preservation Society carer on the other side of Port Stephens for assessment. He was certainly in a distressed state, was dehydrated and there was concern that he may have sustained head injuries. However, after three days of an intravenous fluid drip and a trip to Noah's Ark vet in Nelson Bay for a check-up, it was determined that he was probably just dazed and heat stressed. So he was released back in Hawks Nest a little distance away from where he was rescued to try to avoid further confrontation with the resident "alpha" male.

An interesting sidelight to this story was that when in care it was found that he had a microchip installed which showed that he had been in care a year previously. He had been called Jye after rescue from Kingfisher Avenue near the Jean Shaw Koala Reserve. He had been attacked by two dogs after foolishly dropping into their fenced backyard. Fortunately for him he only suffered bruising and again was released after only a few days in care. Since the first rescue he has put on more than three kilograms of weight and moved more than a kilometre, probably in search of a territory of his own; hence the fight in Carinya Close.

### **Koala Sightings Hotline**

There have been a disappointing number of koala reports on the Hotline (4997 0878) this summer – 20 compared to 47 last year. We ask everyone to PLEASE tell us if they spot a koala. You can ring our answering machine and leave a message at any hour of the night or day.

Any wildlife rescues can be called by ringing 0418 628 483 (0418 NATIVE).

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

# **Quarterly Koala Report for August 2016**

## **Myall Koala & Environment Group**



Encouraging Louise to Climb  
(Photo: Louise Haynes)



In Care with HKPS  
(Photo Sue Swain)

### **We Lost Our Louise**

In early June we were called out to a baby koala on the ground in the Swan Bay area of Hawks Nest following a cold and bitter night. Her mother was in the tree above. Despite encouraging the baby to climb the tree to her mother and waiting nearly an hour for mum to collect her, it was decided she needed to be taken into care. We named her Louise, after the lady whose home she was found in, and took her to the group that cares for our koalas, Hunter Koala Preservation Society (HKPS) on the south side of Port Stephens. On arrival into care, she weighed a miniscule 356 gm (a full grown koala weighs 10 kg or more). Over the next few weeks she seemed to be thriving on six hourly feeds, day and night, on a special formula for marsupials. She gained 466 gms. Suddenly one night she began suffering severe diarrhoea going downhill over the following 24 hours and then sadly passed away. Because of the unexpected nature of her death, she was sent to the University of Sydney Veterinary School for a post mortem. She was found to have a twisted bowel which may have been brought on by formula she was eating rather than her mother's milk. The Australia Zoo, who is the primary authority on koala biology, advises that the success rate for artificially rearing pre-weaned baby koalas is only 10%, particularly if the baby is found on the ground and not in mum's pouch. Currently there is no specific artificial formula for koalas who have a significantly different biology to other marsupials because they eat eucalyptus leaves. Research is going on to try to develop a koala formula and, if successful, the hand-rearing success rate should improve.

### **Annette Miller's Koala Walk**

Over a period of several years from 2004 to 2010, Annette Miller, a resident of Margaret Street in Hawks Nest, undertook a daily "koala walk" in the streets around her home to observe, photograph and report koalas which she found in the trees.

Annette developed an extensive knowledge of the particular trees in which koalas feed and rest in the area bordered by Cooloon and Bennett, Booner and Coorilla Streets, Hawks Nest, part of the "magic square" as it is locally known. Annette also developed a detailed understanding of the regular movement patterns of the koalas she observed.

Because Annette hasn't been walking the streets in recent years, there was a concern that her knowledge may be lost. So, Annette and a friend Paul Caddy, a Tasmanian who holidays here each winter, walked the "magic square" to record the GPS coordinates of all Annette's key koala trees and taking notes on the condition of the particular trees.

# **Quarterly Koala Report for August 2016**

## **Myall Koala & Environment Group**

During their walk they observed a notable decline in the number, size and condition of key koala trees in the area due to the removal of whole trees (as a consequence of the 10/50 Rule and the April 2015 major storm), the lopping of trees (loss or removal of large limbs and crowns), apparent disease and death of significant parts of or whole trees and a lack of new koala trees being planted. They estimated that at least 25 to 30 percent of key koala habitat trees have been affected by one of these factors.

It is obvious that significant changes have occurred to the koala habitat in this area of Hawks Nest. The loss of and damage to previously key koala feeding and resting trees was striking and coincides with a notable reduction in koala sightings in this area in recent times.

The trees of the Hawks Nest area that were surveyed are mature and there is no apparent regeneration occurring. This loss of habitat does not bode well for the koalas.

### **Koala Sightings Hotline**

There has been a pleasing increase the number of koalas seen in Hawks Nest this winter - 29 compared to 6 in 2015. The majority of these sightings were reported directly to us. We ask the community to PLEASE report your koala sightings on our Hotline answering machine any time of the day (4997 0878) or on our Facebook page (Myall Koalas).

Any wildlife rescues can be called by ringing 0418 628 483 (0418 NATIVE).

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