

Annual Koala Report - May 2018

Myall Koala & Environment Group



Parramattensis



Beside a common Eucalypt

Quiet Time for Koalas

The past year has been fairly quiet on the koala front in the towns with 104 sightings compared to 126 last year. There was one confirmed sighting of a baby. Surprisingly, there was only one koala sighting in Swan Bay which may indicate that Princess has moved on. She was the long-term resident there with the green tag in her right ear. It is too early to say that this is a long term downward trend because in the past there have been quiet years followed by a later upturn. One of the reasons that our koalas are generally healthy with good genetic diversity, despite the fact they are an urban population, is that they are able to move freely between the township and the national park to the north thus enabling new animals to come into town. It can sometimes be a few years before new stock appears in town.

Despite this, we do have some concerns about their habitat in town. In the past two or three years there have been many koala food trees cut down in Hawks Nest, firstly as a result of the initial implementation of the Rural Fire Service 10/50 Rule and more recently as a result of storms causing large branches to fall and frightening some residents into removing their trees. Our Group has instituted a new strategy, in conjunction with Council, of planting koala friendly street trees on public land and on verges away from houses (and power lines) to try to replace some of the lost vegetation. Most of the plantings are of Eucalyptus Parramattensis trees which are favoured by koalas and more importantly are attractive and do not grow very tall (about 4 metres).

What's Happening on the Highway?

In the past two years we have experienced a major increase in the number of koalas being hit by vehicles on the highway in our area. Five koala hits have been reported to us between the Viney Creek Road turnoff and Karuah. Miraculously, one of them survived and was saved by an intrepid lady who stopped her vehicle and picked it up next to the median strip. It was taken into care with only fairly minor injuries and was returned to bushland habitat nearby but well away from the highway. Sadly the other four were killed instantly. We don't know what the reason for this upsurge is or if it is just very

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bad luck. Perhaps it is koalas looking for mates or possibly escaping the drought affected inland for the coastal vegetation that has received more rainfall.

Koala Strategy

We were very pleased to hear recently that the State Government has committed to funding the establishment of a Koala hospital in Port Stephens near Anna Bay. We have no facilities in town to treat any of our sick or injured koalas so whenever we get one we have to take it to a carer on their property on the south side of Port Stephens. This has worked fine over the years but a properly funded hospital will be able to provide better care as well as research facilities. The koalas on the south side of Port Stephens are in severe decline and it was recently proposed to list them as "endangered". Unfortunately, this was rejected by the NSW Scientific Committee because it did not fit the definition of the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016. This Act, despite its title, is universally regarded as reducing protections for endangered or vulnerable species.

Koala Sightings

To help us to continue to understand local koala movements, PLEASE report every sighting on our Hotline answering machine at 4997 0878.

Gail & Ian Morphett (4997 1550)

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Hawks Nest/Tea Gardens Koala Sightings

Koala Sightings Summary 2017/2018

Area	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	2017/18	2016/17
A	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
B	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	7
C	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	8
D	0	0	0	3	6	7	19	8	5	0	0	0	48	38
E	0	1	1	1	4	6	2	11	7	10	1	0	44	67
F	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
G	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
OOT	0	0	1	1	3	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	9	5
Total Koalas	2	1	3	5	14	15	21	19	12	11	1	2	104	126
Total Sightings	2	1	3	5	14	15	19	19	12	9	1	2	102	115
Hotline	2	0	2	2	7	4	11	14	7	0	0	1	50	44
Percent	100%	0%	67%	40%	50%	27%	58%	74%	58%	0%	0%	50%	49%	38%

A	Tea Gardens
B	Swan Bay
C	North of Kingfisher
D	Central Hawks Nest
E	"Magic Square"
F	Winda Woppa
G	Pindimar
OOT	Out of town