

Quarterly Koala Report – February 2020

Myall Koala & Environment Group



Koala at Bombah Point Eco Cottages
(Photo: Duncan & Suzie)

Regional Koala Recovery Collaboration

In the wake of the catastrophic mid-north coast bushfires in late 2019, Mathew Bell, Senior Ecologist at MidCoast Council is organising a collaboration project involving all affected parties to develop a recovery strategy for the devastated koala populations. Hundreds of thousands of hectares were burnt out and it is estimated thousands of koalas were killed in our region. We have all heard about the fact that over ONE BILLION wildlife creatures have been incinerated in this year's bush fire season in Australia.

Mat has invited a who's who of people and organisations involved in koala care in the region including Tim Faulkner from Australian Reptile Park and Aussie Ark, Cheyne Flanagan, Clinical Director of Port Macquarie Koala Hospital (who is speaking at the UN later this month on the plight of our koalas), Dr Steve Phillips (BIOLINK and co-author of the NSW Koala Recovery Plan), Dr Rebecca Montague-Drake (Hastings-Macleay Koala Recovery Partnership), Koalas-in-Care Taree, Port Stephens Koalas, Myall Koala and Environment Group, Port Stephens Council, MidCoast Council, Port Macquarie-Hastings Council, Kempsey Council and NPWS.

Port Macquarie Hospital in particular has some very innovative plans to build a breeding programme for unreleasable koalas (due to injury) to then release their offspring back into the wild. As a result of their very successful Go Fund Me campaign, the hospital has significant funds to establish the breeding sites and do the clinical studies necessary to ensure proper genetic matching of the animals in the breeding programme.

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Koala Sightings

Koala sightings have been well down on last year this quarter. Unfortunately, this is partly due to the fact that, for the second time in two years, our sightings hotline phone line being out of action. It has been fixed now.

There has been some bad news and good news in the Swan Bay in Hawks Nest recently. In December, a young female koala was hit by a car in Monterra Avenue which, despite being taken to the Tea Gardens vet, did not survive. Then in January a mature male koala was found dead in a driveway in Muneela Avenue. When the vet examined it was found to have dog or dingo bite marks to the neck. The good news is that most of our recent koala sightings have been in Swan Bay, including one of our iconic "Princess".

Please report all koala sightings on our hotline answering machine 4997 0878. The information we glean from these reports such as location, time of year, frequency of koala use, sex (if known) goes into our database. From these statistics we can extrapolate koala number trends, movement corridors and home ranges. We then have a better chance of protecting and hopefully increasing our small endangered koala population. Periodically we send our data on to the relevant authorities, e.g. Council, NPWS and peak koala bodies.

In our area, help for sick or injured koalas and other wildlife can be obtained by calling Wildlife in Need of Care (WINC) on 1300WINCWL (1300 946 295). We have a new koala rescuer in town, Glen Stevenson who is a member of WINC and the Koala Group.

Gail & Ian Morphett (4997 1550)