

Annual Koala Report for 2009-10

Myall Koala & Environment Group

Koala Rescues

This year we were called upon to rescue only three koalas.

Koala Avoids Big Shock!

In August, Ronnie and Warwick Nichols were walking their dog Guinness past the electricity substation at Shearwater when he showed interest in something inside the fence. Upon investigating they found there was a small male koala on the ground INSIDE the substation fence bellowing at the dog! They rang us to rescue Sparky from his dangerous situation and Country Energy to ask them to send someone to give us access to the substation. Ronnie also had the presence of mind to get some leaves from a nearby Swamp Mahogany tree to feed to the koala who turned out to be very hungry. The food encouraged him to climb the fence to sit on a support rail and kept him settled while we waited the hour or so for the gates to be opened.

When he arrived, the technician from Country Energy provided some very specific safety instructions for anyone entering the substation. So, Warwick and Ian very cautiously entered while Gail and Ronnie stayed outside distracting the koala's attention by feeding him leaves and talking to him softly. The plan was for Warwick to drop a towel over Sparky's head while Ian would grab him and put him into the safety of a carrying basket. Fortunately, it all went off without a hitch and they got him outside without injury to him (or them).



Ian Morphett carries

Sparky to freedom

(Photos: Warwick Nicholls)

As he was completely uninjured and young and healthy he was released into a Tallowood tree in the koala movement corridor that passes through Shearwater near the substation.

Monkey Jacket

Later in August we had a call from the pine plantation north of Shearwater about a female koala sitting on top of a 6 metre high pile of wood chips. The lads there relocated her to a nearby pine tree. We had been called in to see if she needed rescuing. We have a method of bringing koalas down from a tree. This involves tapping the koala lightly on top of its head, by means of a long pole with a plastic bag on the end. She was too high and the pole was too short, so a forklift was brought in to help give us the height we needed to reach her. Eventually she was successfully brought to the ground where we checked her over. She appeared to be healthy so we relocated her to a nearby Swamp Mahogany tree.

Swan Bay



Sadly, we lost one of our new babies in December. After three days of very hot weather we were called out to a tiny 12 month old koala in Karthena Crescent. She was dehydrated and malnourished and was too weak to cling to Mum's back. Once in care she was rehydrated daily and on the second day took in a little nourishment. She was also found to have a heart murmur. Concern for Mum's wellbeing meant that on the Tuesday we had a protracted capture at the same address involving a borrowed tree fence and trap. At one stage we had even booked a cherry picker for Mum who was 20 metres up a Swamp Mahogany. Fortunately the tree fence and trap eventually worked and was a lot less traumatic for the koala. Once in care,

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Mum was found to be healthy and fertile but her milk was drying up. Baby was pleased to see Mum but too weak to suckle. Although she gained a little weight in care and showed some improvement for a while, the baby ultimately died at 10 pm on the Wednesday night. We had released Mum back into her territory earlier that evening.

Louis Continues to Return!

Our old friend Louis periodically visits town. Louis is the iconic local koala whose photo is on the sign at the Jean Shaw Koala Reserve in Kingfisher Avenue. When Lilly went into care in December 2008 (and subsequently died), Louis disappeared. However, he turned up again in June last year accompanied by a new lady with back baby. He appeared again in March this year, this time on his own.

Conservation Volunteers



In June last year we welcomed a Conservation Volunteers Australia team into town. There were eight volunteers, all from overseas: three from Hong Kong, one from the UK and four from South Korea. They worked for a week on koala habitat and dune restoration in Hawks Nest. This project was initiated and paid for by the Koala Group under the guidance of Great Lakes Council. Although the workers were volunteers, costs such as a supervisor, accommodation, food, vehicle, tools and equipment were incurred.

*Conservation Volunteers spotting
their first koala in the wild
Kikarra Crescent, Hawks Nest*

Koala Sightings

There were significantly fewer koala sightings this year compared to last year (462 compared to 716) but this was largely due to our top koala spotter in the "Magic Square", Annette Miller, being out of town for long periods during the year. Annette was helping family members in Sydney and Ballina. Thank you Annette for your great efforts despite family pressures.

However, it was pleasing to note a big increase in sightings north of Kingfisher Avenue and in Swan Bay, where sightings increased from 4 in 2009 to 32 this year.

Another pleasing aspect was the doubling of the number of sightings reported on the Koala Sightings Hotline (4997 0878). 100 reports were received via our answering machine this year compared to 49 last year. This increase was largely due to Margaret Maclaren who did a great job stepping in to fill the gap left by Annette. Thank you Margaret.

But the most gratifying statistic coming out of this year's sightings was the FIVE babies that were identified in town! We only know of one death this year which we hope means



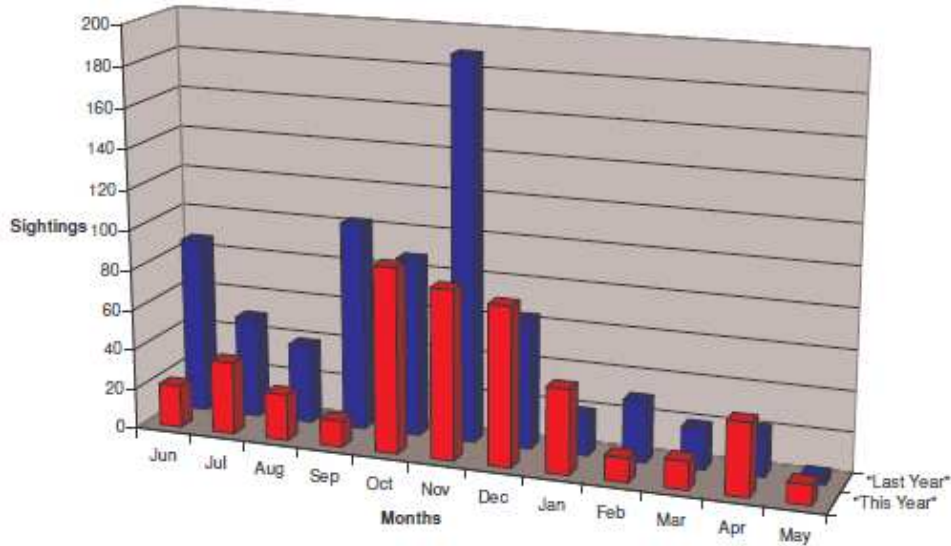
that there has been a net gain of four koalas. In a population of only 15-20, this is a great result. We are quietly confident that our endangered population has at least stabilised and possibly is on the slight increase. It seems to be showing that the Koala Recovery Plan laid down by the Parks and Wildlife Service is beginning to bear fruit. If this continues, it will be the first koala population in NSW to recover from endangered status.

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Hawks Nest / Tea Gardens Koala Sightings 2010 (by Month)



	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
"This Year"	21	36	23	13	92	84	79	42	12	14	36	10
"Last Year"	87	50	39	103	88	189	64	20	30	20	22	4

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Hawks Nest/Tea Gardens Koala Sightings

Koala Sightings Summary 2009/2010

Area	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	2009/10	2008/9
A	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1
B	2	0	1	5	1	10	6	3	1	0	0	3	32	4
C	1	0	2	4	13	11	0	10	3	1	0	0	45	22
D	0	1	3	1	18	6	0	5	0	0	0	0	32	42
E	18	35	15	2	62	56	73	24	8	13	36	7	349	644
F	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
OOT	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3
Total	21	36	23	13	92	84	79	42	12	14	36	10	462	716
Hotline	5	4	7	9	11	7	2	21	6	13	5	10	100	49

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

Gail and Ian Morphett, Koala Co-ordinators