

If you see a sick, injured or dead koala, call the rescue hotline: 6622 1233

Treetops

The Newsletter of Friends of the Koala Inc.

September 2010

Patron: Margot Sweeney (CEO, Summerland Credit Union)

Tracking Mathew

I will always recognise those spots on his bum. After nearly two years of tracking *Mathew* every weekend it has come time to say goodbye. I won't be able to find him so easily now without the radio transmitter. He won't be woken on Sunday mornings anymore by someone beeping and crashing through the undergrowth, staring up at his bum.

Mathew was released in September 2008 at Bill and Carmen's property in Keen Street Lismore after being successfully treated for Chlamydia. He was around six years old at the time and entered history as the first koala in the Lismore urban koala tracking research program. At first small hordes of learner 'trackers' followed his movements. Since then he has primarily been 'my' koala and I have tracked him weekly, often with the help of the energetic and keen Bill.

Some days I found *Mathew* easily but

mostly it would involve an hour or so of climbing cattle tracks up and over a



Sam releasing Mathew

steep hill. He went through periods of staying in thick privet bush forest where I scrambled and tripped just to find him silently watching me. At other times he stayed in the mad bull paddocks right at the top of the hill where I always had to watch my back.

Sometimes *Mathew* would disappear completely and the tracking receiver guided me over to the southern or eastern sides of the hill into the streets of suburbia. I remember I found him on the eastern side when the dust storm came and couldn't help but go back to see what he would do. *Mathew* just seemed to huff in inconvenience, turned his back to the wind, climbed down about five metres and curled into a ball with his head tucked in and his ears down.

For the first half of this year, tracking *Mathew* involved climbing over, through

or under four barbed wire fences, delicately stepping through the lantana and then standing in the mozzies trying to get a GPS location. The steep-banked ridgeline and trees made getting satellite reception impossible as I stomped and slapped my legs, muttering and complaining to *Mathew*, who was genuinely unconcerned. But I did love spotting *Mathew*, the thrill of success making the obstacles forgotten. Both he and I were part of something important together.

Old *Matty* was not always alone; I'll let you in on some gossip... there was a girl, *Maddy*. She seemed a little younger but seemed to like his company, and a number of times she shared his tree. There was also a bigger boy, *Kevin07*, named after the election at the time. When he turned up on Bill's property *Mathew* would be gone by the next morning.

Maddy would also be gone within a day so we suspect that she preferred *Mathew*. Bill and Carmen always hoped to see *Maddy* with a



joey. They haven't yet. She hasn't been seen for nearly a year but, fingers crossed...

With the two year tracking period drawing to a close it was time to catch *Mathew* to remove the collar.

What's Inside

» President's Message	2
» Patty O'Brien - Obituary.....	2
» Care Coordinator's Report.....	3
» Koala Care Statistics	3
» Are we there yet?.....	4
» Care Centre Co-Ordinator's Report.....	5
» Dates for your Diary.....	5
» One for the Koalas	6
» Expect the Unexpected or, Horsing Around.....	6
» Positions Vacant	6
» What a boy!	7
» Vale Constable	7
» Committee Positions up for Election.....	8
» Bruce	8
» AGM Notice	9
» Advocacy and Policy Reform Report.....	10-11
» Bulletin Board.....	12
» Keeping an eye out	13
» Minimum Standards Update	13
» NSW Wildlife Council Report.....	13
» Unsung Hero—Melanie Duncan.....	14
» Member Profile—Helen Hargreaves.....	14
» Application/Renewal Form.....	15
» Contact Details.....	15

—cont'd p 11

President's Message

I know it's going to be a great day when I catch a movement out of the corner of my eye that is a koala descending the trunk of the big Flooded Gum outside my study window. I don't see as many koalas around the house as I used to which saddens me.

Typically the koala skips daintily from branch to branch, backs down the trunk to the ground, sits and looks around and appears to decide in which direction it will head. From that particular Flooded Gum, most koalas bound across the dewy grass and into the rows of macadamias next door. This white-bottomed young female did exactly that until I spooked her by opening a door. My quiet wasn't quiet enough. She stopped in her tracks, jumped a metre or so on to the nearest macadamia trunk, and looked back at me quizzically.

I watched her for a minute before retreating so she would continue going about her business. She climbed a bit higher, perhaps to sleep the day away in the 'maccas', but more likely to stay hidden until she was sure she was unobserved. Perhaps she descended again and scooted between the rows to the eucalypts on the property beyond. If it was high Summer I have no doubt she would have stayed put, taking advantage of the dense shade.

We are so used to looking up at koalas curled tightly in the fork of a tree that it is startling to see the speed with which a healthy koala can move on the ground. Not owning a dog and with quite a lot of food trees (not all of them planted by us), the koalas that come and go are

probably a bit more relaxed moving around our place. Nevertheless, finding the right tree can involve a bit of trial and error and obstacles such as a shed or barbecue, and even fences can present problems.



Lorraine Vass

Not so long ago I tracked the passage of a koala (mostly from inside the house) as it made its way from a Tallowwood to a Palm, (oops that didn't feel right, down it came); galloped across the lawn and up a couple of steps; paused by a birdbath; tried a Banksia; nope, didn't like that so moved on to a Lemon Scented Gum; hung on to the trunk again about a metre or so off the ground and continued to look around; jumped back down and finally disappeared into the canopy of a Turpentine where I presume it spent the rest of the day. That was the longest koala-trek I had witnessed around our place.

Being in the right spot at the right time for such sightings or just hearing grunting through the night is quite energising and necessary to keep me purposeful. Sharing our property with koalas is what prompted us to join Friends of the Koala back in 2000. We had spent a decade in the Top End and had only the slightest knowledge of the species. The previous owners had planted some food trees when they built the house in the late 70s. They told us that the koalas had started using them regularly five or six years before; in the early to mid 90s.

At the time we moved in, towards the end of 1999, we had just retired and spent a considerable amount of most days sitting outside in different locations observing what was going on around us. We frequently saw koalas including

females with young; sometimes quite a number of them. That was before we became Friends of the Koala carers. It is somewhat ironic that these days I'm more likely to be sitting in front of a computer or attending a meeting than looking at koalas, much less involved in a hands-on way in their rehabilitation. While Rick may be outside he's engaged in maintenance and gardening tasks so observation is more incidental than it used to be. Although his health has driven him to make an effort to step back from active membership he has not succeeded entirely.

Koala conservation requires many different skills and Friends of the Koala must continue to attract a variety of talented and committed people to keep it vigorous and healthy. This year we have seen a number of active members having to withdraw because of their health.

While every month is Save the Koala Month for us, September is Save the Koala Month for the general public. When all is said and done, we don't have much spare capacity for special activities. During September our exposure will increase a bit, mostly through participation in events such as the Big Scrub Rainforest Day and the Lismore Car Boot Market where we will be Charity of the Day on 19 September.

An idea I'd like to put to you is that we all make Save the Koala Month work for Friends of the Koala by endeavouring to attract one new member; preferably someone with the potential to become an active member. Time is precious and whilst many would like to help the Region's koalas, it's not always clear to people how they might contribute. As you will read in the following pages, there is much more to koala conservation than training to rescue and rehabilitate the critters.

—Lorraine Vass

Patty O'Brien - Obituary



Hon. Life Member, Patty O'Brien, died on 25 June 2010.

Patty was a life-long lover of koalas, having grown up on a dairy farm in East Lismore. She inculcated other family members and many friends with her passion.

Patty joined Friends of the Koala in 1992 and was a committee member until 2002, working closely with Audrey Hyde in planning and carrying out fundraising for the group over that time. She also organised and supervised the 'community hours' people at the Koala

Care Centre and would often take visitors to see the koalas in care there.

Her koala work was only a small part of Patty's extensive service to the community. She was named Lismore's Citizen of the Year in 1996.

Quite fittingly, Patty's burial at Lismore's Memorial Gardens on 29 June was carefully watched over by a koala. Nothing would have pleased her more.

Care Coordinator's Report

It has been while since I have written a report due to other commitments. First though, a big thank-you to Rick, Lola and Pat who carried out the coordinating role while I went on a six-week trip around Australia. What a great experience that was and how lucky we are to have such a diverse country both in wildlife, landscapes and people. Since returning I have been working full time so Rick, Lola and Pat have continued to take on extra jobs. Their help is greatly appreciated.



Barb Dobner

As with most things in Friends of the Koala, lots of behind the scenes work goes into organising what might seem like something simple. An example is a trip to the Australian Wildlife Hospital (AWH).

This involves a ring around to see who is able to drive up there (keep in mind that a day needs to be set aside); a further ring around to try give someone new to the group the opportunity to see what goes on at the Hospital (see also 'Are we there yet?' on p. 4); a phone call to AWH to book the koalas in and ensure they have enough vets on that day and find out what time suits; confirm and consult with others that the trip is necessary; fill in paperwork for each koala and write up a history of what has happened so far with them and why they need to be looked at; prepare cages for the trip; let people in the

Care Centre and leaf cutters know the koalas are going so they won't be in the Care Centre that day; make a guess at which koalas are likely to return so rooms can be made up and organise for the person transporting to let the

Care Centre know as soon as possible which ones are definitely coming back; double check with AWH that there are no koalas up there that are also due to return. Then there is the checking of paperwork, diagnosis and treatment plans once the trip has been completed.

Every koala that is transferred over the border to Queensland must have appropriate paperwork completed and the transfer must be recorded in our database. We are fortunate that both the NSW Department of the Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW) and the Queensland equivalent, the Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) allow us to transfer koalas over the border. It is important to ensure all requirements related to the transfers are met.

The Care Centre has been relatively quiet. Our home carers are also enjoying a much needed break with all of last year's infants apart from *Joanna* and *Mozart* now released. This is a huge relief as last year was the busiest year yet in regard to infants.

We have had a couple of return tags that are interesting stories. One at Gwen Seznick's for

an orphan that was released a few years ago and now has her second joey – a small back young. The other was a male released over three years ago after being treated for conjunctivitis in home care by Sue Johnson.

Unfortunately this animal, *Bing*, was found deceased however the bright side of the story is that as a result of Sue's care he was given three extra years of life out there. Considering he was an older male koala when released, that is not bad going.

Mathew, the first koala to have a radio tracking collar fitted, has recently had his collar removed after being tracked for two years (see also *Tracking Mathew* p.1). A big thank-you to those involved, in particular, Sam Kendal who spent many hours tracking this boy. We are about to release another collared girl *Ankana*, into Goonellabah. This will leave only one more collar to be fitted.

Regular readers will know that I usually conclude my report with a statistical summary of the koalas reported and entered into our database for the period since the previous issue of *Treetops*. This time, given that the last summary went up to 7 March 2010, and we're a bit behind with our data-entry, the stats included is the 2009-10 annual summary instead.

As always, if there is anyone out there who would like to become more involved than they are, please don't hesitate to speak up. Happy Caring

—Barb Dobner

Koala Care Statistics 1 July 2009 – 30 June 2010

Friends of the Koala attended to or provided advice on a total of 691 koalas

	In Care	Released	Died	Dead on Arrival	Euthanased	Transferred to permanent care	Advice
Injured (15)		7	2		5		1
HBC (62)	5	4	4	29	12		8
Dog attack (27)	3	3	4	5	10		2
Diseased/Sick (240)	14	15	10	8	118		75
Health status unknown (61)				13			48
Aged (5)					4	1	
Assumed Healthy (277)	1	20				2	254
Orphans/joeyes (4)	3	1					
Totals (691)	26	50	20	55	149	3	388

Young koalas are recorded in their reason for coming into care, i.e. diseased or sick as opposed to orphans. Trends to note are: fewer deaths in care but more euthanasias, most likely due to increased knowledge and better diagnostics for assessing koalas. There continues to be a high rate of disease which is the most common cause of death we see. The number of advice calls reporting diseased koalas is increasing indicating, we believe, that members of the public are better informed about assessing disease in the wild which could be a result of the educational efforts of Friends of the Koala. It may also indicate disease is still increasing in our wild populations.

Are we there yet?

I started volunteering with Friends of the Koala about three months ago. The basic care that I and many others perform at the Koala Care Centre includes cleaning the enclosures, replenishing leaf and rendering certain medication when needed. We are aware that the koalas admitted undergo veterinary checks and treatment here in Lismore and if necessary at Currumbin or the Australian Wildlife Hospital. I had mentioned that I would be prepared to help out with transportation in due course. An orientation trip was soon organized.



Claire Douglas

It was a 6am start for Pat and I to take two sick koalas and one very restless one to AWH. *Carrie* (suspected dog bite) had been brought down from a telegraph pole via a Country Energy cherry-picker, *Mathew* (suspected retrovirus) and *Otis* (ol'grumps) for his pre-release check.

After placing their cozy little cages in the van, Pat and I settled in for the long 3½ to 4 hour drive to Beerwah, on the other side of Brisbane. A very anxious trip as we suspected that euthanasia would be the prognosis for *Mathew*. Pat had brought with us a nice white sheet to wrap him in which lay somewhat ominously in the back.

The patients slept quietly all the way up which was peaceful relief. The motorway traffic, on the other hand was pretty wild and I felt a police escort would have helped us weave our way through the never-ending sea of multi-laned roads, overpasses, tile rooftops and concrete walls. I can't keep up with it so it is easy to see

why the koalas are dropping like flies. It is also clear that without the diligent work of all our wildlife warriors (worriers) and carers, our precious koalas would already be extinct.

Finally we reached the Hospital where we were made very welcome. I was immediately impressed with the amount of care all the staff showed for our koalas. It felt good to be surrounded by so many dedicated vets and vet nurses. It was certainly touching to know that when the animals go all the way up there they are so well loved and carefully attended to by all these fabulous men and women.

The Hospital itself is one of the most high-tech I've seen, with equipment designed for everything great and small. Kinda more like a five star resort and health spa for wildlife suffering the everyday stress and strain of financial progress in the ever encroaching concrete jungle and its domestic predators...a far cry from the shed they used to operate out of.

Mathew was first off the rank. No time was wasted in getting him sedated and on the Triage table. The vet examined his mouth and vitals very closely (while Pat and I waited with bated breath). Our fears were put to rest. What we had thought were ulcers, turned out to be extremely bad tartar on his teeth which the vet removed with a great deal of muscle and determination. There was unanimous agreement that *Mathew* was well enough to live out the rest of his life under natural circumstances. Pat's relief was overwhelming.



Carrie's rescue in Hutley Place, East Lismore (courtesy of the Northern Star)

Mathew was the first koala in the urban tracking program. Over the past two years he had been wearing a radio collar and had endeared himself to his trackers. Pat was not looking forward to telling them the bad news she had expected. Thankfully *Mathew* was coming home again. Yeah and Pat was not the only one who didn't want to drive back with a dead animal. Although I guess there will be unfortunate times like that in store for a novice koala carer like myself.

Next in line was *Carrie* with her suspected dog bite. No puncture wounds were found but she was having trouble breathing under the anaesthetic, maybe

due to some bruising around her lungs from a fall. So, straight to intensive care for *Carrie*, and a very comfy doughnut bed with heat packs. The nurse let me carry her there like a baby and to hold her while they prepared her bed and monitors. Soooo cute with her little pink, smiley face and bandaged arm where the cannula was inserted.

With *Carrie* settled we had a short wait while a pigeon, a possum, a Tawny Frog Mouth and another koala were triaged. They are so incredibly busy up there.

Otis checked out fine and it was fun being able to pat him while he was he was still 'under' without the snarls and grunts he usually throws in my direction.

Some not so good news was then handed on. *Ziggy* hadn't made it. R.I.P. *Ziggy* - poor little fellow. We were also taking *Bunji*, a backyoung that had been undergoing tests at the Hospital since March. *Bunji* was one of those koalas whose condition didn't quite warrant euthanasia but neither was he responding to treatment. It had been agreed that he would go home to see how he coped in pre-release (unfortunately he didn't). A rollercoaster of emotions at AWH!

With *Mathew*, *Otis* and *Bunji* on board we made our way back through the harrowing Queensland traffic to the sweet rolling hills of the Northern Rivers and finally to the Centre. It had been an eleven hour day for us but every minute was worth the effort.

Thanks Pat for taking me up there – it was a great experience.

—Claire Douglas



Kristin den Exter, Associate Lecturer, School of Environmental Science & Management at Southern Cross University took this photo of a mum and bub from the Library stairs. It's the right time of the year for koala sightings on campus. There have been a number of sightings around the Koala Care Centre as well.

Care Centre Co-ordinator's Report

The past couple of months have been relatively quiet at the Care Centre with fewer animals to look after. The welcome respite has given us time to plan much needed work which will expand our capacity for the busy season in front of us. We came up with a plan to divide three of the outdoor runs to make six and the Committee has supported the proposal. The work is in progress as I write.

The absence of animals has also been a good opportunity for another working bee. Again we called on EnvITE. Garth Kindred and his team replaced the logs around the garden edges, cleaned the

steps and footpaths, removed the litter from the gutters, weeded the open enclosure and dug out a tree stump that has been a hazard to all of us. The team also levelled the ground under the picnic table and seats and laid gravel-dust procured by Roy Johnson. Tucked away in the shade, it is a comfortable place to sit outside. A warm thank-you to all who helped.

We were all very sad over the death of *Constable* on 12 August. *Constable* was in permanent care and very important to us. He had not been eating well and during late July he developed mouth thrush. We decided the best place for him was AWH and we know from the email exchange that they were doing all they could for him. See also 'Vale Constable' on p 7.

It was good to see so many Care Centre regulars at the workshop on Adult Koalas presented by Gail Gipp. Although we do our best to keep up with the Hospital's methods and recommendations there is always something new we haven't heard before. This time it was a serious bacterium that can get in to water hoses. We use hoses in the enclosures so we have introduced a new procedure, spraying them daily with F10 (the recommended disinfectant) and running it through the hoses weekly. The importance of hygiene can never be overstated.

While the new no

parking signs are keeping the Care Centre clear for deliveries, we are still working on managing unannounced visitors walking straight into the enclosures, installing a chain being the first step.



Lola Whitney

There is always room for improvement at the Care Centre and Roy Johnson not only makes constructive suggestions, he does the work as well. His latest undertakings are restoring the old trolleys so they are better suited to sorting leaf and developing a collapsible travel cage for those members whose boots are already cluttered. Thanks Roy, no job too big or small.

We have a lot of supporters as well. A couple of months ago I was in Chandlers Furniture & Electrical looking at a replacement set of scales for the Care Centre. I identified myself to an assistant and



New enclosed run

told her my need of the scales and asked about the possibility of a discount. She was back in minutes offering them as a donation. How lovely is that!

Although we have more than our fair share of gloomy days at the Koala Care Centre there is always something happening which brings on an involuntary chuckle. The latest was a koala picked up by a Ballina postie and delivered to us in a canvas mail bag sitting in an Australia Post bin. What a sight – talk about Express Delivery!

I would like to thank all our volunteers and supporters, who do all they can to make a difference. Despite this quarter's lower number of patients, rescues and call-outs continue at all hours of the day and night, far too many ending with euthanasia. It is hard to deal with sometimes, but every minute we put in is important if we are to hang on to our precious koalas.

—Lola Whitney



Gail Gipp's workshop was well attended

Dates for your Diary

September 2010: Save the Koala Month

5 September 2010: Big Scrub Rainforest Day Stall, Alstonville Show Ground, 8.30am - 3.30pm

7 September 2010: Threatened Species Day

19 September 2010: Friends of the Koala Charity of the Day & Stall, Lismore Car Boot Market, Lismore Square

23 September 2010: Friends of the Koala Supervisors' Meeting, Koala Care Centre, 5.30pm

30 September 2010: Announcement of Koala's nomination for vulnerable listing under the EPBC Act.

30 September 2010: Deadline for 2010-2011 Membership Renewal

14 October 2010: Friends of the Koala Annual General Meeting, Lismore Workers' Sports Club, Goonellabah, 7.00pm

19 October 2010: Friends of the Koala Committee Meeting, Lismore Workers' Club, 6pm

23 October 2010: Basic Training, (details to be announced)

23 October 2010 Royal Zoological Society of NSW 2010 Forum: Wildlife and climate change – towards robust conservation strategies for Australian fauna, ANZ Conservation Lecture Theatre, Taronga Zoo, Mosman, 9.00am-5.00pm

26 October 2010: Nature Conservation Council of NSW Koala Forum [Sydney - details to be announced]

30-31 October 2010: Nature Conservation Council of NSW 2010 Annual Conference, Lavender Bay-McMahon's Point Community Centre, North Sydney, 9.30am

11 November 2010: Friends of the Koala Supervisors' Meeting, Koala Care Centre, 5.30pm

16 November 2010: Byron Shire's Biodiversity Free Seminar: Living with wildlife in towns and cities, Byron Shire Council Chambers, Station Street Mullumbimby, 7.00pm to 8.30pm.

16 November 2010: Friends of the Koala Committee Meeting, Lismore Workers' Club, 6pm

23 November 2010: Treetops December issue deadline

23 November 2010: NSW Wildlife Council 19th Ordinary Meeting, DECCW Hurstville

24-25 November 2010: Mini-Chlamydia Conference, QUT (Kelvin Grove Campus).

One for the Koalas

For the first time in New South Wales the Land and Environment Court has convicted an environmental consultancy and one of its directors for giving bad advice to their client on which vegetation could be cleared to prepare for a development.



The vegetation in question was more than three hectares of high quality koala habitat at 60 Port Stephens Drive, Taylors Beach. The Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water prosecuted Orogen Pty Ltd and Anthony Fish for two offences each under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act* for causing damage to the habitat of a threatened species (the Koala), knowing the land contained habitat of that kind. The illegal clearing occurred around January and March 2007. Over three years later, on 8 August 2010 the landmark decisions were handed down.

Orogen and Mr Fish both pleaded guilty. In his evidence, Mr Fish explained that he and Orogen failed to advise the developer that the Act prohibited damage to threatened species habitat unless a development consent had been obtained from Port Stephens Council.

It was a devastating and expensive oversight; devastating because the deaths of 30 breeding females have been attributed to the clearing activity and expensive because the defendants have been ordered to pay \$120,000 in fines, prosecutor's costs and investigation expenses, plus providing \$160,000 worth of environment services (Koala habitat mapping for Port Stephens Council) under the new penalty provisions of the Act. The Court also ordered Mr Fish and his company to take out advertisements detailing their offence.

The cases are the tip of a very large iceberg. They highlight the dilemma of a developer's right to engage a particular environmental consultant rather than 'blind' appointment from a consultants' register and also the responsibility of consultants to provide accurate advice to their clients. We can only hope the Court's message is heard loud and clear.

—Lorraine Vass

Expect the Unexpected or, Horsing Around

Tuesday 10 August was much like any other rostered day at the Care Centre. I had paid a bit more attention to my appearance than usual because I was planning to attend the Koala Lunch Club at SCU's Deck Restaurant. It was to be a farewell for Marg Russell who is having a knee replacement.



All was going well until around 11 am when a call came through to rescue a koala at Bangalow. The caller told me the koala was sitting on a stable fence being licked and nuzzled by two of her thoroughbreds. After requesting that she lead her horses away from their new friend I quickly phoned the ever-faithful



Lola to accompany me on the 30km drive.



By the time we arrived at the address the weather had turned - blowing a gale and raining heavily.

Doing my best to protect my special hairdo, I held a blanket over my head as

we approached the bedraggled koala, still sitting on the railing around the stable. We decided we needed a ladder which was found and put in place. Soaked to the skin, I had given up on protecting my appearance.

We finally got the koala off the fence and safely back to the Care Centre.

Lola and I did make lunch - over an hour late and extremely wet.

The koala, a lovely young male was checked and pronounced by the vet to be fit and healthy. We tagged him and following a couple of days observation took him back to Bangalow, releasing him in a food tree safely away from his equine friends.

—Pat Barnidge

POSITIONS VACANT

If you enjoy helping our furry friends and doing a little part-time job, one of these positions in Friends of the Koala is for you. Whether you are a student looking for a work experience opportunity, an employed person with some spare time, or a retiree looking to keep your eye in, our position could be just what you have been looking for.

Fundraising Officer

- develop fundraising proposals for committee action
- develop sponsorship packages approach corporates and/or schools, etc. with sponsorship proposals
- maintain a database of corporate sponsors

Events Co-ordinator

- respond to local requests for Friends of the Koala's participation in community events
- liaise with local event coordinators roster volunteers at events
- arrange transportation of promotional material from Koala Care Centre to event site

Publicity Officer

- Source opportunities and arrange content for publicising our work
- Write promotional articles, media releases and editorials
- Upload approved content to organisations website

Contact Gwenda Lawther on 6624 6370 or 0413349604

What a boy!

Southern koalas are larger than ours but they don't often fare any better when hit by a car travelling at 80 kms per hour.

Last month, about fifteen kilometres east of Portland in the Western District of Victoria the driver of a Ford Falcon collected an adult male koala despite having applied his brakes and doing all he could to avoid the animal.

Unlike some, the driver stopped to assess the damage. Assuming the koala would be dead, he was stunned to find the animal very much alive and wedged in the car's front grill. Traumatized, it was trapped just under the licence plate with its front paws and head hanging out the front of the vehicle.

The driver phoned Portland's after-hours



One startled Koala

veterinary service before cautiously retracing his route back into town at low speed.

The vet Dr Lisia Sturm said, "It looked quite surprised – if koalas can look surprised. It had its bum wedged right in there meaning it couldn't get out. But he was a big boy and looked really healthy. He didn't have any injuries at all – not even a graze."

The koala was cut from the grill with bolt cutters and kept under observation for the rest of the day before being released back into its habitat later that afternoon.

Dr Sturm also said that the koala's amazing escape showed how important it is for drivers to stop and examine an animal following an accident and before seeking veterinary treatment.

Pretty important to know your after-hours vet or FOK phone numbers as well.

Vale Constable

Constable, our resident koala passed away at the Australian Wildlife Hospital on 12 August 2010. Like his predecessors, *Star* and *Brendan*, *Constable* filled our hearts and we all felt privileged to attend and care for him.

Constable came into care on 6 August 2008, aged approximately four years. Like *Brendan* he had been hit by a car. I had received a call in the middle of the night from Rachel Lontis

on the Rescue Phone. She asked me to go to the Lismore Police Station to pick up a koala that had been left there.

Constable had been taken to a service station and someone at the service station took him to the Police. I called him *Constable* after the police officers on duty who all were very concerned about the injured koala in their midst.

Clearly *Constable* was badly hurt. I looked after him for the rest of the night. First thing in the morning he was examined by Richard Creed who decided he should be transferred to the Hospital.

We were never able to find out where *Constable* came from, who hit him or who took him to the Police. I called in at the station and twice made the rounds of all the service stations in Lismore's CBD but nobody could throw any more light on his circumstances.

Constable's right eye was removed and his sight in the other one was severely compromised. Following an observation period of some months at the Australian Wildlife Hospital, he was returned to the Care Centre with the advice that whilst not suitable for release back to the wild, he could be a candidate for permanent retention.

After spending some months in his enclosure where he maintained his weight without need of dietary supplement and showed no signs of stress at being in captivity, the Committee sought permission from DECCW to keep him permanently.



Constable served as our model koala, providing hundreds of visitors the opportunity to see at first-hand what a beautiful, healthy koala looks like. His round face and chunky body was admired by all.

Earlier this year, you may remember, *Constable* injured one of his toes on his right back paw. It became infected and Vet Rebecca at the Keen Street Veterinary Clinic removed the tip. He came back to us for recuperation and it was wonderful to

see how much he was loved by our carers. Special fixtures were built; blankets were laid on the floor to keep out the cold and there was always someone making sure he got the best of the leaf. Donna Wilson's efforts on Thursdays were particularly appreciated.

While *Constable* appeared to thrive immediately after his toe had healed, he went off his tucker. Barb thought he was depressed and although his body condition was still good, looking a bit AIDS-like. We have learned to respond quickly to these signs and transferred him to AWH. As I have written in my report, he died a couple of weeks later.

The two years that *Constable* was with us were a blessing for him and for us. He could never be released because of his lack of sight and he received the best veterinary treatment and care. His presence taught us that he was a personality in his own right. We learned from him and he will never be forgotten.

— *Lola Whitney*



It was a beautiful evening for this year's Winter Solstice Lantern Parade. The FOK contingent, featuring lantern *Brendan*, *Burrubi* the koala, and several gumnut lantern-carriers, was warmly cheered along the length of the parade route.

Committee positions up for election

The 2010-2011 Committee will be elected at the Annual General Meeting on 14 October 2010. Now is the time to be thinking about putting yourself forward for nomination. Under the Constitution adopted in 2009, Friends of the Koala is required to have a Committee of not less than ten (the office-bearers and at least three ordinary members) and no more than thirteen members.

Being on the Committee requires a commitment of time to attend the six meetings held over the twelve month term and to assist in actioning the business resulting from Committee decisions. There are also advantages.

Committee members are the group's decision-makers. Participation really fast-tracks a member's understanding of the breadth of activities we are involved in and the way in which the organisation functions. It can be a learning experience, especially if a person has not previously served on a committee. You work closely with fellow Committee members and, yes, there can be a sense of real achievement. FOK does not expect people to stay on its Committee indefinitely but we would like a commitment for the full term.

The Committee is responsible for controlling and managing the group's affairs. It is accountable for compliance with the conditions of our rehabilitation and release licence and other legislative obligations. It develops the direction of policy for our activities including rescue and care, habitat, community education, advocacy, lobbying, and research. It also attends to administration including, finance, correspondence, marketing and promotion.

For some years now meetings have been held of an evening at the Lismore Workers' Club however the venue and timing of meetings can be altered to suit the majority. For example, a Saturday afternoon every two months may be a preferable option.

The seven office-bearing positions are President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, Care Co-ordinator, Koala Care Centre Co-ordinator and Trees Officer. The number of general committee members depends on the number of nominations received. A few general committee members have occupied some of the other named positions of Training Officer, Leaf Collection Co-ordinator, Publicity/Marketing Co-ordinator, Telephone Co-ordinator; Fundraising Officer, Events Co-ordinator; and Membership Officer.

There is a degree of flexibility in the duties of non-office-bearing positions, depending on the skills and interests of members who would like to stand.

Office-bearing positions and a brief outline of their duties:

President: Provide leadership to FOK; prepare agendas for and chair meetings of the Committee of Management; chair the Friends of the Koala Care Fund Management Committee; co-ordinate advocacy and policy reform activities, prepare media releases; spokesperson; network.

Vice President: Support and deputize for President as required; assist with co-ordinating activities.

Secretary: Record minutes of Committee of Management meetings; Prepare routine correspondence; Organise the Annual General Meeting.

Treasurer: Bank and manage finances; prepare financial reports; fulfill auditing obligations; receive and receipt fees for new membership nominations; prepare budget; member of the Friends of the Koala Care Fund Management Committee.

Care Co-ordinator: Overall responsibility for the treatment and rehabilitation of all koalas brought into care; work closely with Care Centre Co-ordinator, Phone Co-ordinator, Training Officer,

Home Carers and Veterinarians; authorise diagnostic tests and referrals to the Australian Wildlife Hospital (authorisation of trips to the Hospital made in consultation with President or delegate); maintain accurate records including the database; prepare reports as required by the Committee; spokesperson.

Koala Care Centre Co-ordinator: Manage the Koala Care Centre; ensure maintenance and tidiness; supplies; oversee the hands-on training of rostered volunteers; co-ordinate involvement in voluntary work/award schemes; co-ordinate Supervisors' meetings; prepare reports as required by the Committee.

Trees Officer: Co-ordinate Nursery and related activities; maintain associated records; target priority areas for habitat restoration; liaise with local government and other partners and stakeholders regarding habitat matters; prepare reports as required by the Committee.

All positions become vacant and require formal nomination for election. If you are interested in finding out more about the Committee's work or a particular position, please contact the President.

Bruce

Occasionally we come across a koala that simply does not want to be released. *Bruce* is one of them. Sure, he had a rotten start - when still a back-young he was hit by a car (his Mum died).



Portrait of Bruce at Release by Julie McNor, age 13.

Bruce was sweet and gentle which endeared him to his carers. Finally after nine months he was assessed ready for pre-release out at Barb's place. After a few weeks she

opened the gate, expecting him to hang around for a few days and then scoot off, which is what happened. But he came back.

Bruce, we know life can be hard out there for a young male, but give Barb a break and buzz off.

Subscription Reminder

Membership fees were due on 1 July 2010 and should be paid by 30 September to maintain continuity of financial membership and enable participation in the Annual General Meeting.

See renewal form on page 15.



Friends of the Koala Inc.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Thursday 14 October, 2010 at 7.00 pm
Lismore Workers' Sports Club,
202 Oliver Avenue, Goonellabah

Guest Speaker

Damian Licari

*Environmental Strategy Officer—Ecology
Lismore City Council*

All members (and guests) are invited to attend and hear about Friends of the Koala's achievements over the past 12 months, celebrate presentations, and to elect the 2010-11 Committee.

Join the out-going Committee for dinner in the Bistro at 5.45 pm for 6.00pm
(at own expense)

FRIENDS OF THE KOALA INC. – NOMINATION TO COMMITTEE

We:and.....

being financial members of the Friends of the Koala Inc., nominate:

for the position of:on the Friends of the Koala Inc. Committee

Signed:and

I accept nomination to the above position.

Name::Signed:

Advocacy and Policy Reform Report

While the number of animals coming into care may have been comparatively low over the past quarter, the amount of advocacy work and the time it takes, seem to be ever-increasing.

As I write the country still does not have a government in place. The former Government and the Coalition are neck and neck, busily courting the three rural independents. Although Rob Oakeshott is Member for Lynes (Port Macquarie) down on the Mid North Coast he's got family roots in Lismore. I had the opportunity to meet with Rob a couple of years ago and he's pretty well across koala issues.

There has been a significant swing to the Greens who have won their first seat in the House of Representatives and will hold the balance of power in the Senate in mid-2011. Who can be surprised by that? Whether or not a 'koala factor' has played a part in this is hard to say but surely Senator Brown's call for a national enquiry into koala population numbers, health and long-term management should the nomination for listing under the EPBC Act be knocked back or watered down to the 'conservation dependent' category, is notable. Greg Hunt, the Shadow Minister for the Environment has said the Coalition will review the listing process in six months if they get in.

As far as I'm aware koala conservation didn't attract any other media attention during the election campaign. The Australian Koala Foundation lobbied hard, writing to the 400-odd candidates seeking their commitment to protect the koalas in their electorate should they win office. We also put our local members on notice.

As for the nomination, the Threatened Species Scientific Committee met on 25 August. It is unknown whether Koala was on the agenda, but we presume it was. The expert group of koala scientists who participated in the National Koala Abundance Workshop and who, we understood, were to consider any amendments to the nomination made as a result of new evidence gleaned from public exhibition, has not met.

Still, we are hopeful that any in-coming Government will meet the deadline, and

make an announcement on 30 September.

Closer to home Tweed Shire Council's Tweed Coast Koala Advisory Group met on 10 August. The Group includes six community members, Rhonda James, Anita Mudge, Ralph Kraemer, Simon Graham, Jenny Hayes representing Team Koala Inc. and me representing FOK.

The focus of the first meeting was Biolink's progress report on the Tweed Coast Koala Habitat Study. The news was not good; downright alarming in fact, confirming what we had feared – that our Northern Rivers' coastal koala populations are in the same boat as Queensland's Koala Coast – disappearing fast. Fewer than 200 animals remain, half the number estimated only five years ago.

Tweed Council's immediate response was to resolve that the Advisory Group be requested to give consideration to investigate creating a koala sanctuary in Tweed. Mayor Polglase initiated the idea in a notice of motion, suggesting that a large tract of land be fenced and planted with koala food trees. While the proposition sounds like a ploy for rounding up the hapless koalas and shutting the door on them so the land they presently occupy would be free for development, the scientific evidence is certainly pointing to increased consideration of micro-management solutions. Biolink's final report, which is due in mid-September will provide a fuller picture. I believe there are interesting times ahead for koala conservation in NSW.

The Land and Environment Court hearing of the appeal by Champions Quarry over Lismore Council's decision not to retrospectively approve the construction of a number of noise and vegetation earth bunds commenced with a site inspection on the morning of 23 June, followed after lunch and into the day after by hearing evidence at the packed Ballina Courthouse.

The hearing was adjourned to 27 July to enable gathering of further expert acous-

tic evidence. Senior Commissioner Moore handed down his judgement on 3 August finding that the completed works were so different in type and location from those initially approved by Council that it was outside his jurisdiction. He dismissed the appeal and refused to modify the development consent.

The Court also granted leave to the proponent to amend the quarry extension proposal. A dozen issues have changed, including the Environment Impact Statement (EIS). The revised DA is planned to go on public exhibition from 9 September to 11 October 2010.

It is difficult to know how Lismore Council can be expected to defend the appeal on its decision to refuse permission to extend the quarry. How far have the goal-posts actually moved? The hearing dates are 25-29 October at Ballina Courthouse and 29 November - 3 December in Sydney.

Having responded to Tweed, Ballina and Lismore's draft Local Environment Plans, Richmond Valley's draft plan is now on public exhibition. We had hoped that DECCW and the Department of Planning would have got together to provide specific advice to local government about the incorporation of koala protection into their new LEPs, however this did not occur.



Senior Commissioner, Tim Moore (circled) and entourage, inspecting the illegal work

We asked the Environmental Defender's Office to help us draft a local provision for koala protection which we have offered as a solution for achieving a desirable level of protection for the species through the life of the new LEPs. This is what we came up with:

The Koala [local]

- (1) The objective of this clause is to protect koalas through the proper consideration of koalas as they move in the landscape by:

- (a) recognising that koalas use land outside areas identified as either potential or core koala habitat, within the meaning of SEPP 44 and
- (b) recognising that records of koala sightings are important data that should be considered in the development assessment and control process.
- (2) Despite any other provision of this Plan, development consent must not be granted for development on land where the consent authority is satisfied that there is a record of a koala sighting, unless the consent authority:
- (a) has considered the impact of the development on
- (i) the movement of koalas across the land, and
- (ii) the cumulative impact that the development may have on koala movement on the land
- (b) is satisfied that the development is designed and will be located and managed to avoid any potential adverse impact on the movement of koalas on the land, or if a potential adverse environmental impact cannot be avoided, the development:
- (i) is designed and located so as to have minimal adverse impact on koala movement on the land, and
- (ii) incorporates effective measures to remedy or mitigate any adverse impact caused, including (but not limited to) measures to:
- (A) retain all existing pathways of movement for koalas, including the retention of trees that would facilitate safe koala movement, regardless of whether they are identified as trees of the species that provide potential or core koala habitat and if that is not possible, restore or replace any affected pathways of movement to facilitate the safe movement of koalas;
- (B) protect pathways from predation by companion animals; and
- (C) protect pathways from road-strike within the subject site and on roads within and out-

side the subject site where additional traffic will be generated as a result of the development.

- (3) In this clause pathways of movement for koalas means any area of land across which koalas are known or likely to move.

Over the past quarter Friends of the Koala has also commented on the NSW Department of Industry & Investment's Animal Research Regulation 2010; negotiated with DECCW the permanent placement of three un-releasable koalas; responded to the National Volunteering Strategy; commented on Regional Development Australia, Northern Rivers' Richmond Valley Hot Topics Report; responded to Boral Timber's stakeholder consultation regarding its pursuit of Forest Stewardship Council Controlled Wood status and written a letter to the editor on our misgivings; supported Kyogle Shire Council's installation of koala signage on Homeleigh and Sargents Roads; objected to a designated development to increase quarry extraction on Old Bagot Road, Ballina Shire; commented on additional information requested by Lismore Council on koala activity in the vicinity of a proposed quarry at Molly's Grass Road, Tregagle and to an amendment to an approved subdivision in James Road, Goonellabah; issued two media releases on the displacement of a koala by works associated with the construction of the Alstonville By-pass and negotiated with DECCW the animal's translocation; provided koala records to Biolink Pty Ltd for the Tweed Coast Koala Habitat Study; provided koala records to Landpartners Ltd for preparation of a DA for a residential subdivision in Goonellabah; objected to a DA to expand operation of future East Coast Blues Festivals at Tyagarah and to the construction of a communications tower at Mullumbimby in Byron Shire.

Oh, and we've also submitted all the information required by DECCW to enable renewal of our licence for a further twelve months.

—Lorraine Vass

—from pl

This long-awaited time was exciting as, even though he had been free, now he would be unmonitored and somehow that seemed freer. However, while removing the collar, a variety of symptoms associated with koala retrovirus were noticed and a sad fate anticipated. I couldn't believe it. It didn't seem fair. It was then that I realised how fond I had become of this koala. I felt somehow connected by the bond of seeing him every weekend, like meeting someone for coffee every Sunday. I had a quiet and private reminiscence.

Mathew was taken to the Australian Wildlife Hospital and ... the symptoms were totally unrelated to retrovirus! In fact he seemed to be in better shape than two years before which Care Coordinator Barb attributed to Bill and Carmen's tree-planting. Following a period of observation at the Care Centre he was declared fit for release.

Mathew started moving around in the cage as he neared his home. When I opened the cage lid, he scampered up a young Eucalypt to a low fork and sat there for about two minutes looking at Bill, Carmen, Jesabe and me as we grinned happily back at him. Then he climbed casually further up into the leaves. I am glad that the old boy, who is now eight or nine, is out there living his last days where he should be. And like I say, I will always recognise those spots on his bum.

—Sam Kendal



Controversial koala signage in Kyogle Shire

Friends of the Koala Inc. Charity of the Day

Lismore Square
Car Boot Market & Stall

Sunday 19 September 2010

Approximately 40 volunteers will be needed on the day to cover all entry/exit points

Contact Melanie Duncan
6622 1969 (AH).

This is a major fund raising day for the koalas
We will need your help

Bulletin Board

New members

A very big welcome to the following new members who have been formally accepted into Friends of the Koala over recent months: **Jesabe Warner, Daniele Stott, Daniele Bermadinger, John Partridge, Pauline Malpote, Mark Christensen, Ai Kuramitsu, Chan Wing Yi, and Chan Sin Sing** of Lismore, **Claire Douglas** of South Lismore, **Merinda Williams** of East Lismore, **Rhiana Booth** of Lismore Heights, **Philip Tsourlinis, Jodie Danvers, Jason Hale, Glenn McMellon** and **Maxine Stuart** of Goonellabah, **James Courtney** of The Channon, **Sophie Lancaster-Pembroke** of Barkers Vale, **Ros, Donna** and **Shawn** of Casino, **Emma Abbott** of Monaltrie, **Marcia Lawrence** of Alstonville, **Amanda Gorr** and **Travis Lochert** of Tyagarah, **Jacob Burnie** of New Italy, **Nimali Pathirana** of Cumbulum, **Jennifer Birnie** of Yerrinbool and **Alyssa Cowley** of Hobart, Tasmania.



President Lorraine Vass happily receives Lismore Council's cheque from Mayor Jenny Dowell

Anti-Chlamydia Vaccine Seminar Postponed

The federal election got in the way of the seminar which was to be presented by Prof. Peter Timms, of QUT's Institute of Health and Biomedical Innovation (IHBI). The seminar will be re-scheduled in early 2011. Latest news from AWH is that **Mia**, a female from Tuckurimba and transported to Beerwah in June following an attack by a Mastiff, is in the vaccine trial program and doing well.

Movers and Shakers

Congratulations to Ross Goldingay, Senior Lecturer in Wildlife Ecology at SCU for his Citation for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning. The prestigious and highly competitive national award is conferred by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council. Ross is supervisor of our Urban Lismore Koala Tracking Project.

Robin's stint a record

Robin Dadswell, our resident desktop publisher, has now produced thirteen *Treetops*!

Hanging in with the newsletter for three years is a record. Any job that is reliant

on others' time-frames involves patience and compromise. Nobody enjoys being a nag but rounding up contributions four times a year takes a lot of it. In 2000 the newsletter was being prepared by Isa Web in Canada. Barb Dobner took over half way through 2002, followed by Susie Warrick at the end of 2003; then Eve Sinton in mid 2005, Patti Munro in early 2007 and finally Robin from September 2007. Well done Robin!

Local Government Week

Lismore City Council's Local Government Week celebrations included a Mayoral Civic Reception at which fifteen community organizations, including Friends of the Koala, were presented with grant funding through the 'annual miscellaneous section 356 donations'.

Farmer Charlies Raffle

We are always on the lookout for fundraising opportunities so appreciate the resumption of the Farmer Charlies (Lismore) raffles.

Our turn came up at

the beginning of September. The winner of the donated fruit & veggie tray was Marie Thorpe of Alstonville. We thank everyone who supported FOK by buying tickets.

2010 NSW Community Wildlife Survey

DECC is following up the 2006 postal Community Wildlife Survey with a web-based one. If you participated in the original survey you will remember it is map based and includes both native and feral animals. We circulated members with the survey link some months ago by email. It's still not too late to participate. Go to:

www.conservationresearch.com.au/WildlifeSurvey.html?id=12055

World Rally Championship Review

By the time you are reading this the future of the Australian leg of the World Rally may well have been decided in Paris. The NSW government released the review of the impact of last year's controversial event just 13 hours before the federal elections. Of the 256 written submissions, 190 were *anti* and 66 *pro*. You can download the review at: <http://hmra.nsw.gov.au/publications/Pages/default.aspx> and judge its veracity for yourself.

Vice President steps down

Lynne de Weaver has had to step down from the Committee due to ongoing ill-health. In the past couple of years Lynne's commitment in her area of expertise, marketing and promotion, has been full-on. We have benefited from her networks and appreciate in particular the part she played in organising last year's Koala Conference.

Big Scrub 2010

The twelfth annual Big Scrub Rainforest Day's focus was Animals of the Big Scrub. While Koala may not have been an inhabitant of the Big Scrub it sure lives in the New Scrub, the area from which the Big Scrub was cleared.



Friends of the Koala at the 2010 Big Scrub Day

Mark Wilson and Rick Stewart presented *Promoting Koala Survival* to a fluid audience of about 30 people. We ran our usual nursery and information stall and, despite a smaller crowd than usual, thoroughly enjoyed the day at Alstonville Showground.

Treetops is printed on recycled paper.



Keeping an eye out

The day following Kyogle Council's outdoor staff attending a Flora and Fauna Training Day, one of their work teams came across a dead koala on the Summerland Way. Not only did Ken Moore have the presence of mind (and phone number) to ring Friends of the Koala and report the animal, he was encouraged to provide details of gender, condition and to check the pouch.

The Training Day was the suggestion of FOK member and Kyogle resident, Wendy Sibley. Presenters included Bob Jarman for Northern Landcare Support Services, Stephen King for DECCW (Kyogle Office), Cheryl Cochrane for Northern Rivers Wildlife Carers and our own Rick Stewart and Pat Barnidge. Wendy facilitated.



Flora and Fauna Training for Kyogle Council's outdoor staff

Fourteen staff members attended and although a bit sceptical at the outset, settled in and even started to enjoy themselves.

Council's Risk & Safety Co-ordinator was pleased with their feedback and has already suggested another session next year.

With Ken's example, there can be little doubt about staff's willingness and capacity for doing a bit more for the environment. Great effort all round!

NSW Wildlife Council Report

It's been a busy year for NWC meetings - two AGMs within a matter of months of each other, a special meeting and three ordinary meetings.

The two AGMs were due to postponing last year's from November until March and bringing forward the 2010 AGM to August. The tactic worked - quorum on both occasions and progressing the Council's business is back on-track.

The Council now represents very close to 100% of the State's licensed

Minimum Standards Update

In our March issue we drew members' attention to the *Draft Code of Practice for Injured, Sick and Orphaned Protected Fauna* which was then on public exhibition. Soon after DECCW circulated to wildlife rehab groups the long-overdue review of its *Rehabilitation of Fauna Policy* for comment. Friends of the Koala responded to both, the *Draft Code* and the *Draft Rehabilitation of Protected Fauna Policy*.

We also wrote to Sally Barnes, head of the Parks and Wildlife Group, congratulating the Department on its renewed commitment to the long-standing partnership with voluntary wildlife rehab groups such as Friends of the Koala. We asked her to continue the very important work in hand by reviewing, the 1997 'koala standards', *Koala Care in NSW: Guidelines and Conditions*.

Departmental officers made a presentation on the Draft Policy (including the limited feedback received from the rehabilitation sector) to the May meeting of the NSW Wildlife Council. At the Council's request a 30 days extension was granted to enable more groups to

respond if they chose.

We understand that the Code of Practice has been passed on for comment to Industry & Investment NSW



Participants in the 'Koala Standards' meeting at Port Macquarie. Sally Jacka and Sue Johnson had left early for their 7 and 6 hour drive home.

which has responsibility for animal welfare legislation. Both the Code and the Policy should be signed off by the end of the year.

In regard to the Koala Guidelines, those groups whose licence includes koalas were invited to attend a meeting in Port Macquarie on 14 August. Representatives from Native Animal Trust Fund, Koalas in Care, WIRES, the Koala Preservation Society of NSW and Friends of the Koala attended (Barbara Dobner, Sally Jacka, Sue Johnson, Rick Stewart and Lorraine Vass).

Opportunities to discuss issues of koala rehabilitation with colleagues from other groups and departmental officers are far too rare. We all enjoyed the lively and we hope fruitful day and look forward to commenting on the draft document in due course.

wildlife rehabilitators, estimated to be 4,500.

One of the many pleasing opportunities the Council's formation has given wildlife rehabilitators is improved communication with the NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water, the government agency accountable for wildlife protection and rehabilitation.

The respectful dialogue indicative of this renewed partnership is both refreshing and strengthening for the Council as well as for its member groups.

The Office-bearers for the forthcoming year are Audrey Koosemen - Chair (Native Animal Trust Fund), Stan Wood - Vice-Chair (WIRES), Julia McConnell - Treasurer (Independent Licencees), Brian Chetwynd - Secretary (Northern Tablelands Wildlife Carers) and Shirley Lack - Media Officer (Native Animal Rescue Group).

If you are interested in finding out more information about the Council's current business please contact Lorraine Vass or check the Council's website: www.nwc.org.au

Unsung Hero - Melanie Duncan

Saturday afternoons are usually reserved for sport or gardening but for Melanie Duncan Saturday afternoon means time with the koalas and her co-workers at the Koala Care Centre. It's been that way since February 2007.

Melanie is one of that small group of active Friends of the Koala members who is still on the right side of thirty. She's Tanisha, Jamayne and Kayleigh's Mum and all that entails. She is also studying at Southern Cross University.



Melanie Duncan

Although born in Lismore, Melanie moved around the Northern Rivers wherever work took her parents. She remembers spending a lot of her time in the bush, helping her stepfather mustering or wandering with her dog. She loved animals, particularly horses. A reader, she learned about the world's wildlife as well.

Melanie didn't do much job-wise after leaving Casino High School. Circumstances brought her back to Lismore where she quickly slipped in to motherhood and domesticity. That changed in 2007 when Mel decided she needed to be doing a bit more with her life.

She remembers making three defining choices: attending a Friends of the Koala Training Day, enrolling in a Certificate 3 Community Services course at TAFE and joining Lismore People for Reconciliation. Although not indigenous herself Mel had been born into a family which included older indigenous half-sisters and brothers. Most of her childhood friends were Koori and she was interested in their stories.

Mel's TAFE studies drifted but she stuck with Friends of the Koala and People for Reconciliation. By the end of 2007 she had started going out for a bit of leaf-collecting with Rick Vass and worked part-time at the Eastern Forest Nursery which she had been put on to by Trees Officer, Mark Wilson. She was also a regular at the fortnightly Reconciliation meetings at the GunnaWannaBeCafe, Gallery and Learning Centre in South Lismore.

Mel quite enjoyed her planting work. It enabled her to be outdoors doing something worthwhile for the planet and she stuck at it for two years. As a kid though, her career aspirations were more along the lines of a national parks ranger or an archaeologist. Realizing she still had a way to go if she was to achieve her long-held ambition, she decided on a degree.

Mel had been enrolled in an elective in Aboriginal Studies at Casino High and knew that SCU offered courses in indigenous studies. She started at Gribi College of Indigenous Australian Peoples full-time in June 2009. By this time she, her partner and the children were living on acres out of town at Boerie Creek, and Mel only had a restricted licence. Another task was set her, getting her P plates.

Mel says FOK is her environmental focus and LPFR her community focus. As well as her Saturday roster (which has great afternoon teas) she now collects leaf most Sundays (chauffered by her partner and sometimes helped by the kids), participates in community plantings and other events like the Lismore Car Boot Market Charity of the Day which she co-ordinated last year and will again this year.

Through her Reconciliation group Mel has learned the significance of Boerie Creek's birthing pools to the women of the North Lismore mob. She wonders whether subconsciously she was drawn to the area because of these ancient connections with some of the women with whom she now studies. She worries that the planned extension of the Blakebrook Quarry will interfere with the spirits of those who have gone before and with the koalas hanging in there still.

Having recently sorted out her major, Mel is planning her independent study which will focus on protecting cultural heritage. At this stage she's keeping her options open, not ruling out a higher degree in the years to come.

visit in the early mornings. This area has all the advantages of rural living and having a small city nearby, without the hassles of living in a city.

What are you reading? *Honour this Day* by Alexander Kent, one of a series of novels following the career of Richard Bolitho in the tall ships of the Royal Navy. The series spans a period of about 50 years before, during and after the Napoleonic wars and tells of Bolitho's exploits and progression from midshipman to admiral.

What is your favourite movie? Really hard to pick but perhaps *Grease* for its music and fun.

What's your favourite hobby/pas time? I would have to say that Girl Guiding is my passion. It's so wonderful to see girls developing

skills and confidence in their abilities. It's certainly the thing on which I spend the most time but I also enjoy birdwatching, patchwork and quilting.

Your idea of a perfect Sunday? Sunshine and a good book or our son and daughter home for a visit.

Your most memorable travel experience? We travel a lot and every trip is memorable but my husband and I have just come back from a trip to Russia and the Baltic States which I loved. We travelled by boat from Moscow to St Petersburg, making many stops at villages along the way. St Petersburg was my absolute favourite part of the trip. I've wanted to go to Russia since I was about 18 and I found it fascinating. I suppose this trip is memorable for a bad reason too, I lost my camera with hundreds of photos in it. Fortunately, two friends on the same trip have promised to send me copies of their photos.

What would you most like to be doing in five year's time? Good heavens! I haven't even thought about that but I'd hope to be still travelling to new places, learning about different cultures, meeting new people.

Who is the person you'd most like to meet? I would have loved to meet Lady Baden-Powell. I was a girl when she visited Canberra way back when, but of course I was one of a huge number of Guides and Brownies and leaders who had turned out to see her. She must have been most interesting and inspiring to meet.

What has been your favourite koala moment? Taking my Girl Guides to see the koalas in care. Many of the girls had never seen a koala close up and they were amazed. I haven't taken them for quite a while now - must do it again soon.



Helen Hargreaves

Member Profile—Helen Hargreaves

Helen and Graeme Hargreaves joined Friends of the Koala in August 1993. Years ago Helen and her Guides helped with tree plantings and 'potting on'. They also assisted with fundraising which they still enjoy. Helen's not a regular rescuer although she has done a few when no-one else was available.

What's the best thing about where you live? I love the quietness of this area [Dunoon], particularly late afternoons and at night. When I wake in the middle of the night there's not a sound and one could easily think the world had ended! I like the dozens of different types of birds that call our farm home and the native animals, sadly all too few, that

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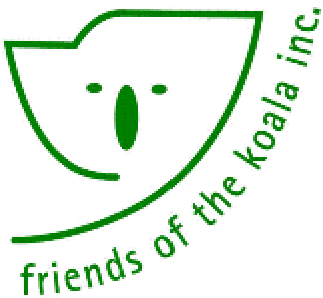
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If you see a sick, injured or dead
koala, call the rescue hotline:

6622 1233

Deadline for next newsletter: Tuesday 23rd November 2010

Contributions gratefully accepted – please post to FOK or email info@friendsofthekoala.org

