



In many parts of the Northern Rivers koalas can be seen just about anywhere.

## Where do koalas live in the Northern Rivers?

Koalas are widely distributed across the Northern Rivers of New South Wales although their numbers vary depending on available habitat. There are regular sightings in all the local government areas of Ballina, Byron, Kyogle, Lismore, Richmond Valley and Tweed.

Koalas are found in areas with extensive bushland such as Horseshoe Creek, Bonalbo, the Border Ranges, Goonengerry, Myocum, Larnook and the Blackwall Range. They also survive in urban areas.

Koalas are known to use people's yards and even the streets of some towns and villages. Such sightings occur in Byron Bay, Kyogle, Clunes, Dunoon, Federal, Pottsville and Wyrallah, to name a few. In most parts of urban Lismore koalas are commonplace.

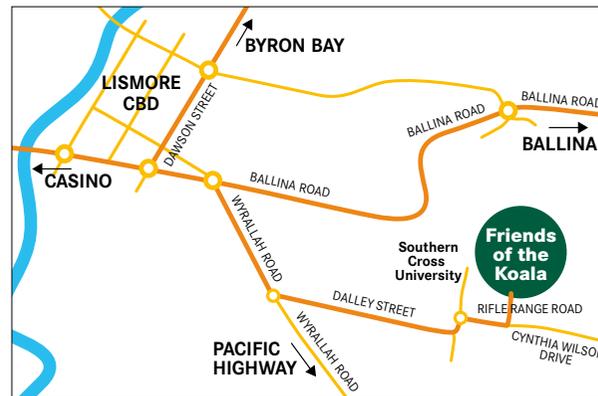
There are concerns however that koala numbers have decreased in recent times as habitat has been greatly reduced and that which remains is fragmented.

## Can't visit but would like to help?

Become a member, adopt a koala, donate or report a sighting of a koala at [www.friendsofthekoala.org](http://www.friendsofthekoala.org)

## Find us

Adjoining the leafy campus of Southern Cross University in East Lismore. Entry is by donation.



### Friends of the Koala Care and Research Centre

23 Rifle Range Road  
EAST LISMORE NSW 2480

Ph: 02 6621 4664

Email: [info@friendsofthekoala.org](mailto:info@friendsofthekoala.org)

**Koala Rescue Hotline**  
**6622 1233 – 24 hours**

[www.friendsofthekoala.org](http://www.friendsofthekoala.org)



Images courtesy of Brad Mustow and David Hancock.  
GRAPHITI DESIGN STUDIO / LISMORE CITY PRINTERY

# Northern Rivers Koala Facts





## Coming into the world?

Across the region, koalas mate throughout the year. The mating season peaks between May and September.

Koalas are the size of a small jelly bean when born; their eyes are shut, ears stuck to their head and they have no fur. They take a precarious journey, crawling into their mother's pouch and attaching themselves to one of her two teats.

Koala joeys spend 6-8 months in their mother's pouch. During this time they grow fur and their eyes open. From 9-12 months they spend their days on their mum's tummy, back or close by, learning how to navigate the treetops and adjusting to a diet of eucalyptus leaves. The next few months are spent in the same vicinity as their mother as they become fully independent and weaned. Females often stay in the same area as their mothers. Young males usually disperse.

## What do they eat?

Koalas survive mainly on a diet of eucalyptus leaves but they do not eat all species of eucalyptus. Their preferred trees in the Northern Rivers are Forest Red Gum, Tallowwood and Swamp Mahogany although they eat many other eucalypts as well.

A full list of koala food trees is available on the Friends of the Koala website - [www.friendsofthekoala.org](http://www.friendsofthekoala.org)

The trees koalas prefer to eat and use for shelter depend on the particular area and its surrounding habitat. For the Northern Rivers non-eucalypts such as Paperbarks and She Oaks are often used.

A koala's metabolism is finely balanced between nutritional needs and energy requirements. Habitat disturbance upsets the balance because koalas must range further afield for their food.

## How long do koalas live?

The oldest wild koala recorded by Friends of the Koala was a female over 18 years old. Generally, their lifespan is 8 to 15 years. Koalas are aged by assessing the condition of their teeth.

## How big are koalas?

Northern Rivers' koalas are similar in appearance and size to Queensland koalas. They have a short, thick, grey coat and are smaller than their southern counterparts. A male koala's average weight is 7-8kg and a female's 6-7kg. That is a bit bigger than a basketball when they are curled up in a tree.



A combination of small pock marks and larger rakes on smooth-barked trees can indicate koala use.



Koala scats are usually brownish and cylindrical in shape. They are firmly packed, containing fine, coarse fragments of eucalypt leaves.

## Looking for koalas?

Koalas are known to live in an area by:

- scratch marks on tree trunks
- scats on the ground
- calls or sounds
- sightings

Watch out for all the signs of koala activity. Report all sightings of koalas to Friends of the Koala so accurate records of activity and sightings can be maintained.

## Male or female?

Male koalas are larger than females and their genitals are visible. They have a longer, broader face and as adults are more muscular. At sexual maturity (2-3 years) they develop a scent gland on their chest which looks like a dirty, vertical mark down the middle of their upper chest.

Females are smaller, with fluffier ears. They have a rounder, softer face and are less robust.





Like us on Facebook or follow us on Instagram and Twitter. Visit our website to find out more about koalas and what you can do to help at [www.friendsofthekoala.org](http://www.friendsofthekoala.org)



Pay attention to road signage - slow down!



If left untreated, ocular chlamydiosis, commonly known as pink-eye, results in blindness.



Trained koala rehabilitators assist wild koalas back to health and eventual release.

### What are the threats to koala survival?

Major threats are:

- Habitat loss and fragmentation
- Disease
- Drivers not slowing down in koala zones (especially at night)
- Dog attacks

Habitat destruction has fragmented koala populations in many areas of the Northern Rivers and disrupted the gene flow necessary for maintaining genetic diversity and good health. Chlamydia is widespread. There also appear to be higher rates of cancer including leukaemia compared to other areas. Habitat loss causes koalas to spend more time on the ground moving between trees. Their exposure to being hit by drivers and attacked by predators increases greatly when koalas are at ground level.

### Is that koala sick or healthy?

Healthy koalas should:

- have a thick, grey coat
- respond when startled
- spend their time high in trees
- have bright alert eyes
- have a full, rounded belly
- clean white bottom

Unhealthy koalas may exhibit any or all of the following:

- brown staining on their rump
- crusty, red or pussy eyes
- brown, dry, matted coat
- difficulty or weakness in climbing
- they sit on the ground unresponsive to what is around them

### What to do with a sick koala?

Phone the Friends of the Koala 24 hour Rescue Hotline **6622 1233** immediately.

### Is that something in its ear?

All koalas rehabilitated and released by Friends of the Koala are tagged with a small tag in their ear. Females are tagged in their right ear, males in their left. If possible please report any tags either on live or deceased koalas including the colour and number of the tag to Friends of the Koala.

### What can you do to help conserve koalas?

- plant koala food trees
- drive slowly in known koala areas particularly between dusk and dawn
- contain dogs securely inside when you're not around, especially at night
- report sightings to Rescue Hotline 6622 1233 or via website [www.friendsofthekoala.org](http://www.friendsofthekoala.org)
- consider becoming a volunteer at FOK - two hours a week or a month can help enormously

### What is being done to conserve koalas?

State and Local Government have primary responsibility for managing and protecting koalas and their habitat in the Northern Rivers. In recent years funding by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment through the Saving Our Species initiative has encouraged several North Coast councils to undertake koala habitat studies and to prepare Comprehensive Koala Plans of Management. Considerable financial assistance through a variety of Federal, State and private philanthropic programmes has been made available to councils and to private landholders for on-ground habitat restoration projects.

Friends of the Koala Inc. is predominately a voluntary koala rehabilitation and conservation group licensed by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment to rescue, rehabilitate and release koalas in the Northern Rivers Region. Amongst many other activities, the group manages a 24/7 Rescue Hotline, operates a regional Triage, Treatment and Pathology Clinic and Education and Administration Centre in East Lismore and maintains a native plant nursery. Its core business also encompasses habitat protection and regeneration; community education; advocacy and research assistance.

To find out more about koala conservation in your area and how you can become involved, contact the organisations listed here.

■ **Injured koalas, sightings**  
Friends of the Koala Inc, 24 Hour Rescue Hotline 6622 1233 or [www.friendsofthekoala.org](http://www.friendsofthekoala.org)

■ **Koala habitat and land-use planning, conservation incentives and education**

Ballina Shire Council: 6686 4444  
[www.ballina.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ballina.nsw.gov.au)

Byron Shire Council: 6626 7000  
[www.byron.nsw.gov.au](http://www.byron.nsw.gov.au)

Kyogle Shire Council: 6632 1611  
[www.kyogle.nsw.gov.au](http://www.kyogle.nsw.gov.au)

Lismore City Council: 6625 0500  
[www.lismore.nsw.gov.au](http://www.lismore.nsw.gov.au)

Richmond Valley Shire Council: 6660 0300  
[www.richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au](http://www.richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au)

Tweed Shire Council: 6670 2400  
[www.tweed.nsw.gov.au](http://www.tweed.nsw.gov.au)

■ **Koala conservation policy and legislation, general information and land-use compliance**

Department of Planning, Industry and Environment  
[www.environment.nsw.gov.au](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au)

