

Central Queensland Koala Volunteers



SUMMER EDITION 2018

Merry Christmas everyone and Happy New Year

This has been a busy and complex year for the koala research team and that has resulted in us being somewhat less organised in our communications with you during the year. However, we greatly appreciate your ongoing support for our koala research. Here is a quick summary of the projects and issues over the year.

St Bees Island Long Term Monitoring

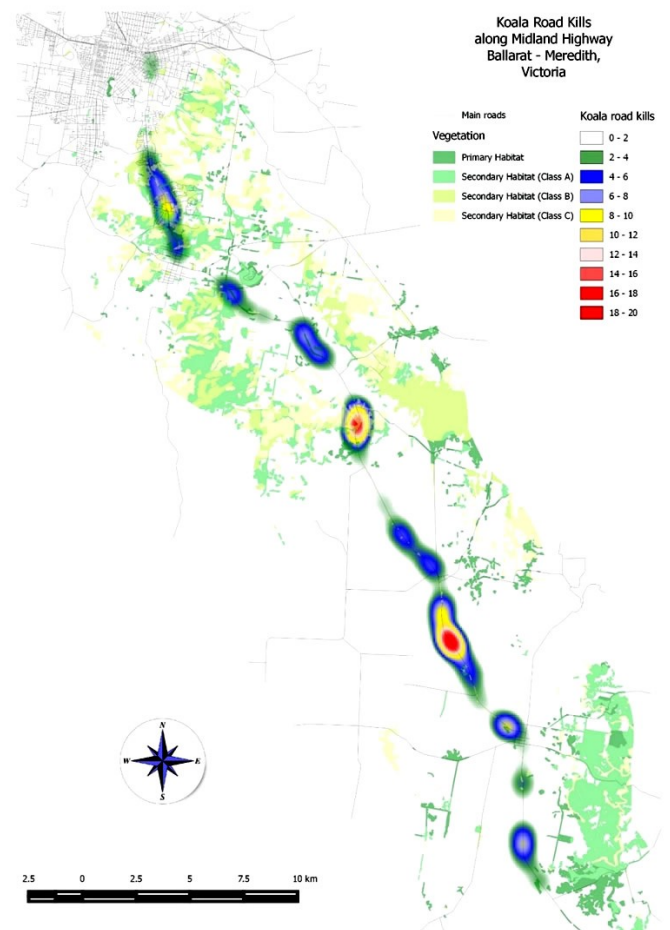
The Earthwatch supported program on St Bees Island continued through 2018 with teams investigating the general biodiversity of the island as well as the management of lantana in grasslands and grassy woodlands. Wayne Houston and Alistair Melzer are running this project in conjunction with Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. The habitat research has at least another 5 years to run. There was not a census of koalas undertaken in 2018. The next census is planned for mid-2019.

Earthwatch St Bees Island partnership ends

Unfortunately, we have had to stop the Earthwatch program on St Bees Island. Because there is a change in the ownership and management of Keswick Island, we can no longer provide surety around the maintenance of our base camp on Keswick or of the transport services from Mackay and between Keswick and St Bees islands. The research will continue but we will be reorganising the logistics and costs to accommodate these changes. There will be more on this in the New Year.

Congratulations to Dr Rolf Schlagloth!

Dr Rolf has been awarded a doctorate for his research on the modelling of koala road kill blackspots. **Dr Schlagloth** will formally graduate in early 2019. However, Rolf has already put his research into practice on the Peak Downs Highway where he has been working to understand the clumping of koala road kills between Nebo and Eton.



Heat map (using Kernel Density Estimation applying 1000 metre radii) of koala road-kill along the Midland highway dissecting the study site near Meredith (between Ballarat and Geelong); indicating Koala Road-kill Blackspots and areas of concern.

Clarke-Connors Ranges Koala Study

The Department of Transport and Main Roads commissioned CQ Koala Research to undertake a study of the koalas along the ranges from north of Eungella to south of St Lawrence.

There was a particular focus on the Peak Downs Highway between Nebo and Eton. **Dr Rolf Schlagloth, Dr Flavia Santamaria, Leif Black and Dr Alistair Melzer from CQU** worked in conjunction with **Dr's Bill Ellis, Sean FitzGibbon and Ben Bath** (long standing colleagues) to undertake a basic investigation of the range and habitat use of the koalas, the circumstances around the high frequency of road kills in the region, mitigation of road kills and management of the of the habitat. This work was completed in late 2018 and the reports will be publicly available through the Department of Transport and Main Roads web site in 2019. This was a big effort over two years. Congratulations to the team.

Avocet Nature Refuge Koalas

The proposal from **Dr Flavia Santamaria and Ian Denley** to undertake drone-based koala surveys has been postponed 'till cooler weather in 2019. Ian has the drone ready to go. Once the temperature difference between the koalas and the background is at a maximum (late autumn/winter) the team will run the drone and hopefully locate koalas in the tree tops. In the meantime, we continue to be advised of koala sightings and wildlife camera records of koalas in the nature refuge (Thanks Tom and Janelle!).



Similar type drone



Goondaroo Nature Refuge Koalas

Ian Denley and Alistair Melzer have assisted Bush Heritage Trust in applying for a grant to facilitate volunteer surveys for koalas in Goondaroo. This nature refuge adjoins Avocet, and it is expected that the koalas will occur across both refuges. A decision on the grant application is due before Christmas 2018. More on this later.

Capricornia Koala Reintroduction

Over the last 18 months, progress on this project has focused on developing a captive breeding agreement to allow the Rockhampton Zoo to breed koalas for release to local properties. Despite earlier encouraging signs, it has become too difficult to continue with the captive breeding program for now. In the end The Rockhampton Zoo was unable to meet negotiations with the regulatory requirements of the Department of Environment and Science

The project continues, however. CQU and Koala Research CQ are currently rejigging the approach to pursue reintroduction through direct translocation. They are working on research activities to enable future translocation and release of suitable animals to the region. There will be more on this in the new year.

Koala Expert Panel Recommendations Accepted

The Queensland Government has accepted the key recommendations of the Koala Expert Panel for the revised planning and management of koalas in the southeast Queensland planning district. There will be more detail on this in the first newsletter next year. However, they have deferred actions on the recommendations for the remainder of Queensland until the actions in the southeast are reviewed. This will be some years away.

Royal Society of Queensland Research Trust

The CQKV seeded the establishment of the Royal Society of Queensland Research Trust. This year the Trust passed its first funding milestone and was able to make the first call for proposals that could be funded. The initial funds available for granting were small (\$5,000) but numerous applications were received. Two researchers were funded. These were:

Alex Jiang from the University of Queensland.

He is investigating koala-cattle interactions (*we have records of koalas being mobbed and killed by cattle in Qld and NSW*)

Chapa Gimhani Manwaduge from the Queensland University of technology, working on the conservation biology of threatened native olives (*Notolaea* species) in southern Queensland.

Links to their projects are found on

<http://www.royalsocietyqld.org/research/>

Best wishes for the holidays.

I am looking forward to wet days.

Alistair Melzer

Mission

CQ Koala Volunteers seek the conservation of the koala and other tree living mammals in Central Queensland by

- *Supporting research into koalas, other arboreal mammals and their habitat through (a) providing volunteer support to research projects, and (b) assisting in the raising of funds for research and the volunteer teams;*
- *Developing public awareness of the needs of koalas, tree living mammals and their habitat requirements generally;*
- *Fostering community support for koalas and tree living mammals generally;*
- *Encouraging and assisting with the development of habitat rehabilitation projects where necessary through the region;*
- *Supporting the rehabilitation and release of sick, injured or displaced koalas and tree living mammals.*

The Central Queensland Koala Volunteers are not about stopping development. They seek to encourage planned development, which allows for the co-existence of koalas and other tree living mammals with human activity.

Funds are used to buy equipment for the researchers, to fund volunteer field teams and provide limited support for animal carers. Donations may also be made to the Koala Research Centre of Central Queensland and are tax deductible.

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