

Winter Edition 2015

Central Queensland
Koala Volunteers



St Bees Island research camp nears completion.



Earlier this year CQUniversity (CQUni) and the Central Queensland Koala Volunteers (CQKV) joined with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) to establish a research camp on St Bees Island. QPWS installed the bush toilet. CQUni and CQKV funded the construction of a storage shed and work platform. Currently the shed and platform are being fitted out. In August the rainwater tank was installed and the metal work was treated to resist corrosion. Currently work benches are being installed. Work on the camping ground will commence shortly. This camp will be available to researchers, students and volunteers from the New Year.

St Bees Island August 2015 field trip

Alistair Melzer, Leith Black and French intern, Jenny Degorgue visited St Bees for a week from the 19th August. They spent a few days working on the shed (above) and cutting walking paths through the lantana. The paths were cut to facilitate the work of the November Earthwatch field expedition. The team was joined by Earthwatch Research Director, Justin Fowler, for a day or so. Justin visited the island to familiarise himself ahead

of the November trip. The island provided a great show for Justin's visit. Butterflies were congregating in the rainforest gullies; creating blizzards of butterflies as we walked past. A small group of koalas (at least one female and two males) watched us as we worked on the shed. Finally a female humpback whale and calf swam leisurely through the channel about 100m from our observation post on the coastline. The University of Queensland crew joined us during the week. Together, we set out over 80 data logger throughout the forest. The intent is to map the heat environment over the study area in an attempt to understand why there appeared to be a relatively high koala mortality in one part of the study area. Leith and Jenny also assisted the team with some koala catching for disease studies.

QPWS had completed a controlled burn on the island some weeks before we arrived. The burn was focused on the grasslands, but did include the woodlands around Honeymoon Bay. The burning was effective, and did not scorch the canopy of the koala habitat on the hills around Honeymoon Bay. The intent of the grassland burning is to limit the spread of lantana and native trees and shrubs into the grassland. The burning of the woodlands is to restrict the spread of rainforest trees and shrubs as well as lantana through the woodlands, and to facilitate the germination of koala food tree species.

Alistair Melzer

The island is in drought. There has been a



weak wet season and very poor winter rain. The rainforests are starting to drop their leaves. In some places bloodwood and blue

gum trees have died or are dying back. In many parts of the island the grass cover or litter cover has disappeared; largely due to browsing and grazing by swamp wallabies. So far the koalas appear healthy, with most females having young. However, the hot weather and the dry spring is just arriving. So we will be watching the fate of the koalas and their habitat carefully over the next six months.



Gladstone Field Fest



Sunday 31st May was our annual participation at Gladstone Field Fest. I travelled down with Alistair and Rhonda armed with 2 baskets of 'orphaned' toy koalas in the hope of raising some much needed money.

It was an opportunity to meet the public and show that koalas are still being regarded as a species to be cared for, also that Central Queensland Koala Volunteers are doing their best to help maintain the existing population with research into habitat needs, eating habits and loss of vegetation to name but a few areas of research. This year was not as profitable for us as previous years - not selling as many 'orphan' baby koalas as we had on other days. However we did gain a new member and there was a lot of interest in our activities, with Alistair answering many scientific questions regarding the research program. It was a very pleasant day.

Because I am a known member of CQKV I frequently am told of people's encounters with koalas. Unfortunately it is mostly a dead koala being reported. It seems as if the Northern road is still the most likely road to see dead animals on the road. Maybe more signage would help.

Carmen Drake

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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