

## Saving our Species project 2014-15 annual report card

### Koala

#### Species attributes

Scientific name:	<i>Phascolarctus cinereus</i>
NSW status:	Vulnerable
Commonwealth status:	Vulnerable
Management stream:	Iconic



Photographer: L. Morrell

<b>Key management sites:</b>	Bellingen Byron Bay Campbelltown Coffs Harbour Gunnedah	Nambucca Palerang Richmond Valley South Coast Wingecarribee
<b>Project partners:</b>	Bellingen Shire Council Byron Shire Council Campbelltown City Council Coffs Harbour City Council Nambucca Shire Council Nature Conservation Trust	Palerang Council Richmond Valley Council Wingecarribee Shire Council NSW Environmental Trust Office of Environment and Heritage

#### Summary of outcomes

Koala surveys and habitat mapping to inform the development of comprehensive koala plans of management and habitat restoration projects are being implemented across the state amongst a range of other threat reduction activities.

#### Total expenditure

Funding source	Funds expended
Office of Environment and Heritage	\$203,750
NSW Environmental Trust	\$755,691
Australian Government Biodiversity Fund	\$316,636
Other cash and in-kind contributions	\$43,910
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,319,987</b>



### **Project objectives (from NSW Recovery Plan)**

- To reverse the decline of the koala in New South Wales
- To ensure adequate protection, management and restoration of koala habitat
- To maintain healthy breeding populations of koalas throughout their current range.

### **Summary of activities**

Completion of the koala survey and habitat mapping project for the Nambucca and Palerang Shires provided the basis for draft Comprehensive Koala Plans of Management (CKPoM).

The Bellingen Shire Council CKPoM has been approved and adopted, while Campbelltown City Council's CKPoM was drafted and independently reviewed. Byron Shire's CKPoM was drafted and now awaits peer review prior to being submitted for council approval.

Wingecarribee Shire Council established a community hotline to collate public sightings of koalas. The first five collars were deployed for a tracking study across the Southern Highlands. Systematic surveys have begun to identify high quality habitat using vegetation mapping and occupancy data. Substantial in-kind contributions from the council, University of Sydney, Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife, and Conservation Volunteers Australia.

Coffs Harbour council completed research using long-term data to monitor change and evaluate the success of koala conservation efforts. This will inform future investment and policy decisions.

Koala population and habitat assessment was completed by Richmond Valley Council.

The creation of vegetation corridors to assist the Gunnedah regional population of koalas was slowed by drought conditions but is being progressed by the Nature Conservation Trust of NSW.

A substantial body of work on the south coast coordinated by Office of Environment and Heritage includes Indigenous community engagement, establishment of survey sites, research, fire planning and feral predator control.

The NSW Environmental Trust has provided funding of more than \$1.6 million to 21 projects actively focused on the restoration and rehabilitation of koala habitat. Funding spent on these projects in 2014/15 was \$755,691. Together these projects will leverage more than \$2.7 million in cash and in-kind contributions over a three-year period.

**Table 1. Management site outcomes, excluding activities funded by NSW Environmental Trust**

Site	Expenditure	Key outcomes
Statewide	\$83,750	Statewide coordination of Office of Environment and Heritage koala management.
Bellingen	In kind	Council approval and adoption of CKPoM.
Byron Bay	In kind	CKPoM drafted and refined, now awaiting peer review before council approval.
Campbelltown	In kind	CKPoM drafted and independently reviewed.
Coffs Harbour	In kind	Publication of scientific papers providing the findings of research into the degree of success of prior koala conservation efforts.
Nambucca	\$60,000	Survey and mapping of habitat of approximately 36,300 ha within the Nambucca Shire Council Coastal Koala Habitat Study area. Survey of 126 sites for presence of koalas. Final report and koala habitat mapping was adopted by council at its meeting of the 24 September 2015. Production and distribution of a brochure to raise awareness of koalas and their management in the local government area.
Palerang	\$60,000	Koala survey of 153 sites, sampling 4,590 trees within the Palerang Shire Council Koala Habitat Study area. Completion of a draft study report, presented to council.
Richmond Valley	In kind	Koala population and habitat assessment completed.
South Coast	\$316,636	Indigenous community engagement including koala surveys, habitat rehabilitation and fire management. Establishment of 1,000 survey sites across the study area. Koala scat detectability study to inform robust monitoring protocols. Training of a detector dog for locating koala scats. Landscape-scale fire planning with the Rural Fires Service (RFS), the University of Melbourne, local land managers and landholders for the protection of key koala habitat areas. Coordination and implementation of feral predator control programs in and adjacent to the koala habitat areas with land managers and the Rural Lands Protection Board. Detailed advice prepared by University of Sydney regarding the management of the existing small koala population in south east NSW to increase its chances of long term survival and recovery.
Wingecarribee	\$43,910	Community koala hotline established. First 5 collars deployed for tracking study. Systematic surveys identified high quality koala habitat.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$564,296</b>	

**Table 2. Management site outcomes - activities funded by NSW Environmental Trust**

Site	Expenditure	Key outcomes
Bellingen	\$33,238	Rehabilitation of significant koala habitat on private land through systematic bush regeneration works. Increased habitat connections, vegetation extent and reduced weed impacts in the Bellingen and Kalang River Valleys.
Byron	\$18,758	Rehabilitation of significant koala habitat through weed removal.
Coffs Harbour	\$45,750	Mapping of 4.5 ha of primary koala habitat, and rehabilitation of 19 ha of habitat. Targeted community awareness and engagement program.
Coffs Harbour	\$1,917	Weed removal from a 2.3 ha site adjacent to Coffs Creek. Small-scale revegetation for the expansion of the Coffs Creek wildlife corridor used by koalas and other species.
Great Lakes	\$47,181	Endangered koala habitat and corridor restoration in Hawks Nest.
Greater Taree	\$27,790	Restoration of riparian vegetation communities along 1.1 km of Browns Creek including weed removal and planting of 2,000 native plants.
Gunnedah	\$32,000	Restoration of koala habitat in Gunnedah.
Hawkesbury	\$57,547	Restoring the Macdonald Valley ecosystem.
Kempsey	\$19,600	Kempsey koala corridors project.
Lismore	\$37,357	Rehabilitation of koala habitats and corridors through bush regeneration works including weed management and strategic revegetation.
Lismore	\$34,387	Restoration of significant koala habitat including systematic weed control and small-scale revegetation. Establishment of a community demonstration site for koala habitat restoration.
Lismore	\$20,903	Rehabilitation and enhancement of native vegetation supporting a threatened koala population in the Lismore region, including weed control and expansion of koala feeding habitat.
Port Stephens	\$19,550	Tilligerry Peninsula community bush regeneration project.
Port Stephens	\$25,315	Hunter estuary koala habitat rehabilitation.
Richmond	\$42,245	Fire management planning, weed control and mosaic patch burning across 52 ha of koala habitat. Increased community capacity in bush regeneration, monitoring and fire management.
State-wide	\$143,000	Improved identification and management of koalas and their habitat in private native forestry and state forest.

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**Table 2. Continued**

<b>Site</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>Key outcomes</b>
State-wide	\$33,415	Development of a genetic assay for wild and captive koala populations to assess their genetic diversity for direct application to conservation decisions and captive breeding programs. Genetic assessment of both koala retrovirus infection and Chlamydial infection status in tested koalas. Creation of a genetic tissue bank of all koalas sampled as part of the project.
State-wide	\$12,000	Friends of the Koala Lead Environment Community Group grant.
Tamworth	\$16,206	Exploration of functioning refuge habitat in the Pilliga.
Tweed	\$30,030	Cross-tenure invasive animal control to protect native fauna.
Tweed	\$57,502	Creation of two ha of core habitat for a regionally significant koala population protected within Cudgen Nature Reserve. Rehabilitation of more than 75 ha of degraded swamp forest and other koala habitat. Community engagement in the rehabilitation works.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$755,691</b>	