



Corridors & Core habitat

for koalas on the NSW far south coast

Newsletter 2

February 2013

The project will....

Undertake thorough surveys to identify key koala populations

Protect and enhance high conservation value koala habitat

Support Forests NSW to identify alternative timber resources and harvesting strategies to enable koala habitat to be protected

Rehabilitate koala habitat through revegetation and reducing threats

Link replanting and restoration on all tenures to improve habitat connectivity for koalas and increase natural stores of carbon in the region

Develop best practice threat abatement and fire management for koalas across all tenures

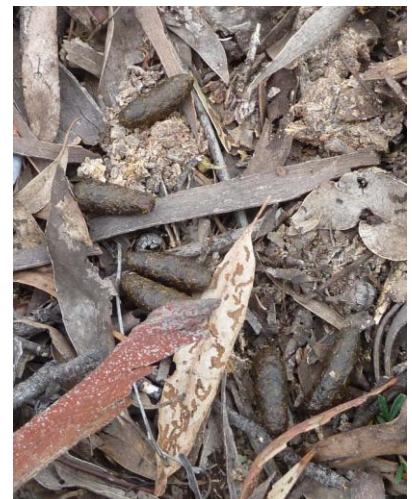
Welcome to the Corridors and Core Habitat newsletter No. 2. It's been a busy few months with survey teams going flat out in the field and a lot of planning for different parts of the project going ahead in the background. This newsletter focuses on the surveys completed to date and touches on upcoming work with opportunities for volunteers and field assistance.

Survey update

Since the project commenced, surveys have been undertaken in Murrah, Mumbulla, and Tanja State Forests, the Kings Ridge Rd section of Mimososa Rocks National Park and the Nutleys Link Fire Trail area of Biamanga National Park. These areas were a priority for survey to assist decision-making regarding proposed logging and fuel reduction burns.

The past three months have been particularly busy, with two or three survey teams in the field each week. Overall, up to mid December 2012, 341 sites have been assessed, which has involved searching under more than 10,000 trees for koala pellets.

The map on the last page of the newsletter shows the survey results to date. Preliminary analysis of the data indicates an increase in koala activity when compared to the results from the 2007-9 surveys. There has also been an increase in koala sightings over the past 12 months between the Bermagui and Bega Rivers (ten in total), the highest in many years. This suggests the population may be expanding and showing signs of recovery.



Survey Teams

The fieldwork for this project is a massive undertaking and we would like to acknowledge the survey contractors who have been working tirelessly, including: the Bega and Merriman's Aboriginal Land Council (Yuin Kelly, Angela Parsons, Hayden Briggs, Peter Burton and Eric Dickson), The Crossing Land Centre Trust (Dean Turner and Sam Hodder), South Coast Eco-Arbour (Rob Summers and Daniel Grayson) and Yuri Weidenhofer, Roger Park, Cici Legoe, Anthony Lord, Mark Lems and Kahli Bressner. NPWS staff from the Enhanced Bushfire Management Program also made a great contribution.

Consolidate partnerships with indigenous communities and involve Aboriginal people in koala surveys, monitoring and management

Improve the viability and resilience of koalas in the region through translocation and supplementation

Implement robust monitoring to detect changes in population and habitat to inform management



Yuin Kelly, Cici Legoe, Eric Dickson, Hayden Briggs & Roger Park



Sam Hodder

One of the surveyors worthy of particular mention is Sam Hodder, who recently won the Illawarra Region VET in-schools trainee of the year award. Sam is undertaking his school-based traineeship with The Crossing Land Education Trust, a non-profit organisation located near Bermagui which teaches young people about land conservation work and sustainability. Almost all of Sam's work is associated with the survey program and koala habitat rehabilitation on the Woodside property which adjoins the Crossing on the northern side of the Bermagui River.

Greater Gliders and Bega Wattle

At one site in Murrah State Forest a survey team found the remains of a freshly-killed **Greater Glider**. Piecing together the evidence (a decapitated body and a very fresh owl pellet) it is likely that the survey team disturbed a Powerful Owl roosting with its meal that it had killed the previous night. In addition, another survey team found Greater Glider pellets about 500 metres away on the same day.

This is the first evidence of Greater Gliders in these coastal forests, despite surveys at more than 800 sites since 2007. By comparison, in the escarpment and hinterland forests evidence of Greater Gliders was found at almost one third of the sites surveyed in 2007-9.

A survey team also found an extensive stand of the threatened **Bega Wattle (*Acacia georgensis*)** in Tanja State Forest. This species is listed as vulnerable at both the State and National level. These long-lived, drought-tolerant and fire-sensitive wattles are known from less than 20 sites in the region.



Koala habitat rehabilitation

These survey results from this project will help guide the selection of priority areas for koala habitat rehabilitation on adjoining private land in projects being managed by the **Southern Rivers CMA** and also funded by the Australian Government's Biodiversity fund. In the long term, through the efforts of both projects, it is expected that koalas will move into restored habitat, thus enabling local landholders to make a vital contribution to koala conservation in the region. Landholders in localities adjacent to the study area, including Coolagite, Cutagee, Murrah, Wapengo, Tanja, Angledale and Reedy Swamp who may be interested in planting koala feed trees should contact the Bega office of the Southern Rivers CMA on **6491 8200**.

Fire Management

In November, Chris Allen met with the local Bushfire Management Committee and shared the results of the survey. In addition, other staff from the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage presented information on guidelines, decision-making and operational experience of fuel reduction efforts within the broader coastal koala area. A key outcome from that meeting was that maps identifying the locations of koala activity (assets) would be provided to every incident controller in the event of a wildfire within in or near the coastal koala areas. These locations will be factored into fire response decision-making, both in the event of wildfire and in fuel reduction burns. This is a great step in recognizing and protecting koalas in the landscape.

Mapping koala habitat quality

The Corridors and Core Habitats project has partnered with the **CSIRO** as part of a nation-wide project funded by the Australian Government to map koala habitat quality. This ground-breaking project will use a combination of field-based leaf sampling and airborne imagery to map habitat quality for koalas based on the nutritional value of the foliage. Further information about the CSIRO project is available at:

<http://www.decision-point.com.au/past-issues/dpoint61/mapping-koala-habitat-quality.html> .

Volunteers

Volunteers have made a vital contribution to previous koala surveys in the region. If you are keen to get involved with the Corridors and Core Habitats project in 2013, please contact Chris Allen to register your interest. There will be lots of opportunities for field work, and who knows, you may even see a koala!

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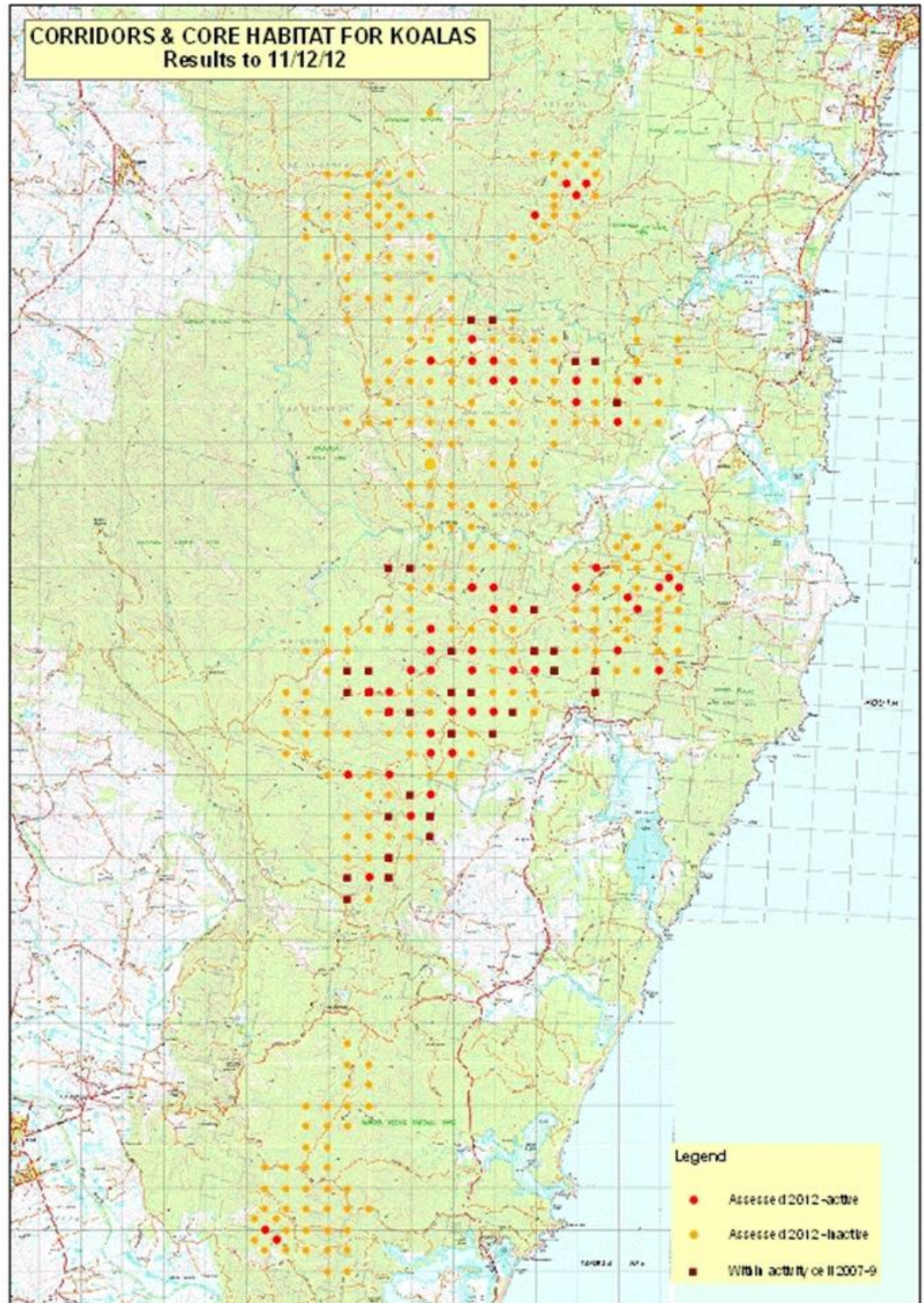
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Corridors and Core Habitat koala survey results

Orange dots are sites that were assessed but had no koala activity; **red** dots are sites that were active, with one or more trees having koala pellets in the forest litter below; and **dark red** squares are within activity areas from the 2007-9 surveys.

