Koala Habitat

Koalas

The Koala is listed as a 'vulnerable' species under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* (TSC Act). This is due to the severe decline in Koalas across NSW, having disappeared from between 50 – 75% of their former range. Koalas are now uncommon, rare or extinct in many parts of NSW. Additionally, the species has a poor recovery potential (low breeding rate) and is subject to many on-going threats.

Where do they live?

Koala habitat is generally poorly represented in the State's National Park and Nature Reserve system with many important areas of habitat occurring on private lands.

Koalas feed almost exclusively on the leaves of a small number of trees, mostly eucalypts. In any one area only a few types of trees are favoured as the main food source and not all individuals of these tree types are eaten.

Generally, Koala habitat quality is influenced by factors such as soil nutrient, topography, rainfall and past disturbances.

Identifying Koala Habitat

Koala habitat can be identified by:

- the presence of Koala food trees;
- historical or recent Koala records;
- the presence under trees of Koala faecal pellets (scats);
- the presence of Koala scratches on trees.

John Turbill

Koala

Presence of Koala Food Trees

A list of Koala food trees in NSW is shown below in Table 1. The list is divided into seven Koala Management Areas (KMAs) across the state. Map 1 illustrates the KMA boundaries in relation to NSW.

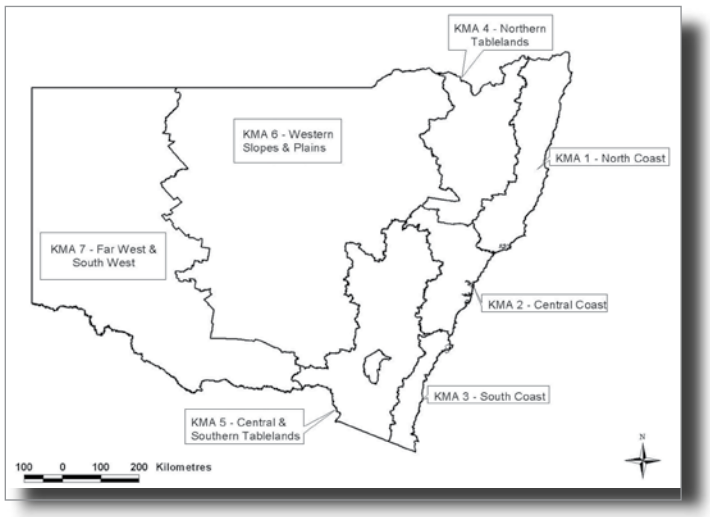
Historic and recent records

Historic and/or recent recordings of Koalas in an area can be assessed from present and past landowners, neighbours or local wildlife carer groups.

Additionally, information on whether any records occur on or near the site can be found on the Atlas of NSW Wildlife. (See website in section 'Further Reading').

To check whether Koalas are present in the trees on your property the canopy and branches of individual primary and secondary trees should be searched from at least two opposite observation points.

Map 1: Koala Management Areas (KMAs) across NSW



Department of Environment & Climate Change NSW

Private Native Forestry - Advisory NOTE 9

List of Koala Food Trees for NSW

Koala Food Tree species								
Common Name	Scientific Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	
PRIMARY TREE SPECIES								
Cabbage Gum	E. amplifolia	X	X		X			
Orange Gum	*E. bancrofti*	X						
River Red Gum	*E. camaldulensis*						X	X
Coolabah	*E. coolabah*						X	X
Tallowwood	*E. microcorys*	X	X					
Parramatta Red gum	*E. parramattensis*	X	X					
Swamp Mahogany	*E. robusta*	X	X					
Forest Red Gum	*E. tereticornis*	X	X	X	X			
Ribbon Gum	E. viminalis		X	X	X	X		
SECONDARY TREE SPECIES								
Narrow-leaved Peppermint	*E. acaciiformis*				X			
White box	*E. albens*				X	X	X	
Tenterfield Woolybutt	*E. banksii*				X			
Blue Box	*E. baueriana*		X	X				
Eurabble	*E. bicostata*				X	X		
Grey Gum	*E. biturbinata*	X						
Blakely's Red Gum	*E. blakelyi*				X	X	X	X
Coast Grey Box	*E. bosistoana*		X	X				
Apple-topped Box	*E. bridgesiana*			X	X	X	X	
Broad-leaved Sally	*E. camphora*		X		X	X		
Large-fruited Grey Gum	*E. canaliculata*	X						
Dirty Gum	*E. chloroclada*						X	
Argyle Apple	*E. cinerea*					X		
Fuzzy Box	*E. Conica*		X		X		X	
Yertchuk	*E. consideniana*		X	X				
Monkey Gum	*E. cypellocarpa**		X	X				
Mountain Gum	*E. dalrympleana*				X	X		
Tumbledown Gum	*E. dealbata*				X	X	X	
Dwyer's Red Gum	E. dwyeri		X		X		X	
Slaty Red Gum	*E. glaucina*	X	X					
Bundy	*E. goniocalyx*		X		X	X		
N/A	*E. interstans*				X			
Craven Grey Box	*E. largeana*	X	X					
Black Box	*E. largiflorens*						X	X
Woolybutt	*E. longifolia*		X	X				
Maiden's Gum	*E. maidenii*		X	X		X		
Moonbi Apple Box	*E. malacoxylon*				X			
Brittle Gum	*E. mannifera*		X	X	X	X		
Yellow Box	*E. melliodora*				X	X	X	X
Brittle Gum	*E. michaeliana*		X		X			
Western Grey Box	*E. microcarpa*		X				X	X
Grey Box	*E. moluccana*	X	X		X			
Mallee Red Gum	*E. nandewarica*						X	
Narrow-leaved Black Peppermint	*E. nichollii*				X			
Large-flowered Bundy	*E. nortonii*				X	X		
Mountain Mahogany	*E. notabilis*	X	X		X			
New England Pepperment	*E. nova-anglica*				X			
Swamp Gum	E. ovata		X	X				
Snow Gum	*E. pauciflora*			X	X	X		
Pilliga Box	*E. pilligaensis*						X	
Red Box	*E. polyanthemos*			X	X	X	X	
Bimble Box	*E. populnea*						X	X
Orange Gum	*E. prava*				X		X	
Brittle Gum	*E. praecox*		X		X			

A list of Koala food trees for each Koala Management Area across NSW

1 = North Coast;
2 = Central Coast;
3 = South Coast;
4 = Northern Tablelands,
5 = Southern Tablelands;
6 = Western Slopes and Plains;
7 = Far West and South West.

Common Name	Scientific Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Small-fruited Grey Gum	*E. propinqua*	X						
Bastard Eurabbie	*E. pseudoglobulus*			X				
Grey Gum	*E. punctata*		X					
White-topped Box	*E. quadrangulata*	X	X		X			
Red Mahogany	*E. resinifera*	X	X					
N/A	*E. retinens*				X			
Candlebark	*E. rubida*			X	X			
Rudder's Box	*E. rudderi*	X	X					
Steel Box	*E.rummeryi*	X						
Large-fruited Red Mahogany	*E. scias*		X					
Narrow-leaved Red Gum	*E. seeana*	X						
N/A	*E. vicina*						X	
N/A	*E. volcanica*				X		X	

Koala Scats

Another way to determine if Koalas are present is to look for their distinctive droppings (faecal pellets or scats). This should be done by carefully searching the ground under each primary and secondary food tree, between the dripline of the canopy and the trunk (see photograph below). You should spend at least 2 minutes per tree searching the ground on and within the leaf litter to determine if scats are present.

Koala populations are generally sparse or low density in the South Coast, Central and Southern Tablelands and Western Koala Management Areas (Koala Management Areas 3, 5, 6 and 7 in Map 1) and, as a result, scats are less likely to be found. Therefore, recording of any scat or a Koala sighting in these areas should be considered significant.

Koala Habitat Significance

Action - Where there is an existing record or recent sighting of a Koala the area should be recognised as Koala habitat.

DECC

Undertaking a Koala scat search

The hard, firmly packed scats of the Koala may vary in colour and contain fairly coarse fragments of leaf cuticles, chiefly of eucalypt species. Fresh Koala scats may smell of eucalyptus oil, but when dry have little odour (Triggs 1996).

Koala Habitat Significance

Action - Where there is an existing record or recent sighting of a Koala the area should be recognised as Koala habitat.

DECC

Koala scats

Koala Habitat Significance

Action - Where any Koala scats are found under a tree, this area should be recognised as Koala habitat.

Shane Ruming

Koala scats

Scratches

Koalas may also leave distinctive scratches (claw marks) on the bark of trees that they climb. These scratches are more visible on smooth barked trees and may persist until the trees shed their bark. It can be difficult however to confirm that scratches on the bark of any tree are from a Koala rather than possum or a goanna.

John Turbill

Koala scratches

Koala Habitat Significance

Action - Where Koala scratches are observed, it is likely that the area has been recently used by a Koala and further investigation should be carried out to confirm whether the area is Koala habitat.

Your responsibilities

- Timber harvesting is not permitted within any area identified as "core koala habitat" within the meaning of State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) 44 – Koala Habitat Protection. The Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC) or your local Council may be able to provide information on where any areas of "core koala habitat" have been identified.
- The retention and protection of Koala food trees is required where there is a record of a Koala within an area to be harvested or within 500 metres of this area, or a Koala faecal pellet (scat) is found beneath the canopy of any Primary or Secondary Koala Food Tree.

Other day to day practices that can assist Koalas in the wild include:

- protection and management of Koala food trees, including regrowth areas;
- restrain farm dogs from roaming in bushland, particularly after dusk;
- watch for Koalas crossing roads at night;
- report injured or sick Koalas to your local wildlife carer group or contact the Department of Environment and Climate Change.

Further Reading

- NPWS (2003), *Recovery Plan for the Koala (Phascolarctos cinereus)*. Draft Plan for Public Comment. NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.

- To make a search for koala records on the NPWS Wildlife Atlas http://wildlifeatlas.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au
- DECC: www.environment.nsw.gov.au
- Koala species profile at http://www.threatenedspecies.environment.nsw.gov.au/index.aspx

Shane Ruming

Mother and baby

Department of Environment and Climate Change
1300 361 967 | environment.nsw.gov.au
info@environment.nsw.gov.au | August 2007
ISBN 978 1 74122 521 1 DECC 2007/361

Department of Environment & Climate Change NSW