

Koalas

Help Koalas by retaining gum trees and by planting more.

Loss of habitat is today's greatest danger for Koalas. Dogs and motor vehicles kill Koalas everyday.

Behaviour

Koalas are nocturnal (night active) and arboreal (tree dwelling). They are usually seen during the day while they are asleep or resting.

Food

Koalas are remarkable animals. Their food consists almost entirely of the leaves of certain species of eucalypts and related plants. This food (about 500 grams is eaten per day) is high in toxins and extremely low in nutrients (food value), but Koalas process it very efficiently.

Where do Koalas live?

The favoured habitats for Koalas are open forests and woodlands where their food trees occur. Much of the best Koala habitat was cleared for farming and grazing at the beginning of the twentieth century. Koalas now breed only in small pockets of good habitat surrounded by less suitable marginal areas occupied mainly by non-breeding young males.

Urban Koalas

You may be surprised to know that Koalas live in many of the urbanised areas of our region. Koalas can also be seen in our parks and nature reserves, in trees along road verges, in school playgrounds, and in even sitting in trees in shopping centre car parks.



Koalas can be hard to spot. How many Koalas are in this picture?

Much of the Koala's habitat in the Moreton Bay region is on private property.

Habitat restoration

To restore Koala habitats and increase wildlife corridors we can grow suitable local gum tree species. Most of these trees, when mature, are medium to very large trees. The most important trees are those allowed to grow to their full height, in a natural ecosystem. These trees remain healthy and robust and able to support many native species as well as Koalas.

When retaining Koala habitats, to keep the food trees healthy, we must also retain or restore other plants of the ecosystem. As well as food trees and other trees, there needs to be a normal variety of understorey and groundcover plants and climbers. Leaf litter is also important. These support a wide range of animals, such as insects, which supply food for other species. A natural community with insects, spiders, frogs, lizards, native birds and mammals is part of the balance that keeps the dominant trees healthy. Microhabitats provided by cavities, hollows and cracks – most common in old trees, encourage these native animals.

Have you seen a Koala?

Council has mapped the areas in the Moreton Bay Region where Koalas generally occur. If you are unsure of whether Koalas live in your area, call council on 3480 6666.

Council also keeps records of Koala sightings - please tell us if you see one.

What trees should we plant?

There are many things we can do to help protect and increase Koala habitat – particularly on private property. It is best to plant Koala food trees in areas where they can safely reach their full height. Some forms of Bloodwood and Brush Box are suitable for smaller yards, and can easily be prune managed for height. Below is a list of Koala food species of our region. Contact council if you require advice about establishing or maintaining Koala habitat.

Koala food tree research

In the future, it is possible that selected forms of some species of Eucalyptus, Corymbia and Lophostemon will be developed as Koala fodder plants suitable for small allotments. Council has formed a partnership with the Sunshine Coast University to investigate the production of smaller growing gum trees suitable for planting in urban areas.

Koala food trees of our region

Common Name	Scientific Name	Comments
Spotted Gum	<i>Corymbia citriodora</i>	Tall, slender tree
Large-leaf Spotted Gum	<i>Corymbia henryi</i>	Tall tree
Pink Bloodwood	<i>Corymbia intermedia</i>	Medium tree
Large-fruited Grey Gum	<i>Eucalyptus biturbinata</i>	Large tree
Narrow-leaf Ironbark	<i>Eucalyptus crebra</i>	Medium to large tree
Grey Ironbark	<i>Eucalyptus siderophloia</i>	Large tree
Rose Gum	<i>Eucalyptus grandis</i>	Very large tree
Tallow Wood	<i>Eucalyptus microcorys</i>	Large tree
Gum-topped Box	<i>Eucalyptus mollucana</i>	Large tree
Blackbutt	<i>Eucalyptus pilularis</i>	Large tree
Small-fruited Grey Gum	<i>Eucalyptus propinqua</i>	Large tree
Scribbly Gum	<i>Eucalyptus racemosa</i>	Medium to large tree
Red Mahogany	<i>Eucalyptus resinifera</i>	Large tree
Swamp Mahogany	<i>Eucalyptus robusta</i>	Medium tree
Sydney Blue Gum	<i>Eucalyptus saligna</i>	Very large tree
Narrow-leaf Red Gum	<i>Eucalyptus seeana</i>	Small & medium forms
Grey Ironbark	<i>Eucalyptus siderophloia</i>	Large tree
Qld Blue Gum	<i>Eucalyptus tereticornis</i>	Large tree; a favourite
Brush Box	<i>Lophostemon confertus</i>	Large tree
Broad-leaved Paperbark	<i>Melaleuca quinquenervia</i>	Small tree

To help Koalas survive

- Tree clearing laws are applicable in some areas of our region. Council can provide advice regarding vegetation clearing. Residents clearing gum trees are also encouraged to contact the Environmental Protection Agency on 3227 8185.
- We should not let the dog roam, especially at night. It is against the law not to take action to prevent our dogs from injuring Koalas. Severe fines apply.
- If there is a Koala in the house yard the law requires us to restrain the dog and leave the Koala alone. Look from a distance. Trying to catch and relocate the Koala will only stress it and make it less able to survive.
- We should retain Koala food trees whenever possible and plant more local food trees.
- Unauthorised translocation of Koalas is prohibited and constitutes an offence under the Nature Conservation Act 1992.
- We should make our fences Koala-friendly (that is, so Koalas are able to cross them). These fences allow Koalas to move from food tree to food tree, enabling them to mate and allow the offspring to disperse after the breeding season. Timber fences allow Koalas to climb.

To make existing fences Koala friendly we can:

- Lean planks or logs up on either side
- Plant trees close together on each side. Neighbourly cooperation may be needed.