

# GUM TIPS

March 2022



It's official,  
**KOALAS ARE  
ENDANGERED**

## WE CAN ALL HELP STOP THE DECLINE

- Talk to your state and federal MPs
- Talk to your local council
- Donate to wildlife and conservation organisations
- Volunteer your time

**ACT NOW BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!**

# GRAFTON FREDDY AND WHY HE IS IMPORTANT

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*Freddy has settled in quickly at the Koala Hospital.*

## We have much to learn from Grafton Freddy

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In September 2021 a motorist noticed an adult koala sitting low in a small bush on the side of a busy main road. The koala was rescued by WIRES New South Wales (NSW), an important licenced wildlife group (one of 31 licenced wildlife groups in the state) that the Koala Hospital often works with.

Grafton Freddy was bought into care with a WIRES carer in Grafton, NSW, and then taken to Friends of the Koala in Lismore for examination by the veterinary team.

Grafton Freddy was found to be suffering from multiple genetic abnormalities which include scoliosis/kyphosis – curvature of the spine and a misaligned jaw causing his top incisors to protrude significantly over his lower teeth.

As these abnormalities have the possibility of causing a reduction in life span in koalas, a decision was made to transfer Freddy to the Port Macquarie Koala Hospital for permanent care. These abnormalities pose a breeding risk in the wild and the Hospital will now also be able to monitor this special koala from a research perspective.

Grafton Freddy is easy to work with and has settled in well to the daily routine here. He has certainly found the local Port Macquarie coastal eucalypt species to his liking and has a very good appetite!

Genetic abnormalities are not uncommon in koalas which live in highly fragmented habitats where small populations become cut off from mixing with other koala populations, through constant removal of habitat for human development. These cut-off small populations end up becoming 'genetic islands', where young koalas cannot disperse out and new recruits cannot come in, forcing koalas to mate with related individuals. Abnormalities such as Freddy's can be the result. Genetic diversity can become very low in these populations placing animals at risk, for example by reducing their ability to adapt to the changing climate.



Freddy's jaw is significantly misaligned.

The Koala Hospital's new Wild Koala Breeding Program will hopefully address many of these issues long term, provided enough quality habitat is preserved into the future.

As Grafton Freddy will remain with us permanently, he has become part of our Adopt a Wild Koala Program. He will also be here for visitors to see and importantly, we can learn from him. Freddy should enable veterinarians, vet nurses, wildlife carers and researchers to understand more about genetic abnormalities in wild koala populations.

## You can adopt Grafton Freddy

If you adopt Grafton Freddy for family or friends, you are helping us continue our life-saving work with all koalas.

eAdoptions are available world-wide and are emailed same day. Postal packages can be purchased for delivery to Australia or world-wide but global delivery times can vary considerably at present.

## CONTENTS

Grafton Freddy and why he is important.....	2	24/7 Rescue, how do we do it? .....	10
New! Share Point .....	4	Vale, Dr Joanna Griffith.....	12
Prime habitat saved.....	6	Return to the wild.....	14
Meet our clinic vets, Astrid and Shali .....	8	Girl Scouts reach out from USA.....	15

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# SHARE POINT

A new feature in Gum Tips, where key people in Koala Conservation Australia (KCA) can share updates and information.

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Our organisation continues to change and grow, as it always has over nearly 50 years of history, and we will use this space to keep you informed.

To launch Share Point, we are introducing you to some important new faces in the organisation as well as providing some insight and background into familiar key characters and what motivates them in their work.

## Chairperson, Sue Ashton



As a child, living in the city, I was fascinated by animals – domestic, farm, large and small. An annual highlight was wandering

amongst the cattle, horses, sheep and pigs at the Royal Easter Show in Sydney. Another pleasure was visiting my grandparents who lived in beautiful bushland close to the Hawkesbury River. In the bush I learnt about native animals like possums, gliders, reptiles and the occasional koala. When I lived in the remote areas in the Northern Territory, I discovered wallabies, crocodiles and amazing bird life.

Despite this love of animals, I studied communications at university and for most of my business life worked in communications, public

relations and marketing in large, international companies.

In retirement I have gone full cycle and returned to my first love, animals. At the Koala Hospital I work as a team leader in koala care, assist on the 24 hours rescue line, and am an 'on call' rescuer for koalas. I can be called out at any time of day or night to rescue a koala and admit it to the Hospital for assessment and care.

As Chairperson of KCA I have the opportunity to use my leadership and business skills to guide the organisation and work with our Board on the future direction of this wonderful organisation. I feel honoured to have been given the opportunity to lead KCA through two major multi-million dollar building projects and the establishment of the world's first wild koala breeding program.

## Shali Fischer and Astrid Van Aggelen, Clinic Vets



The clinic has been busy with multiple tasks since we joined the organisation, bringing us quickly up to speed. Other than the day-

to-day treatments of koalas in care, we have been participating in various research projects, collecting blood, fur, scat, swab and tissue samples for various research organisations. This data collection will both enhance our understanding of how to medically manage the koalas we see, as well as teaching us about the unique physiology and problems wild koalas face.

We have also been brainstorming how we too can contribute to the knowledge pool of koala medicine and husbandry, formulating our own ideas for future projects. There is still so much for us to explore in this field, most notably in relation to their gastrointestinal biome, antibiotic usage, chlamydia pathogenesis and diet management.

*Turn to the article on pages 8 and 9 for a more detailed introduction to our new clinic vets.*

## Cheyne Flanagan, Research and Wild Koala Breeding Program



Animals both wild and domestic have been part of my life since I was a small child. Dogs, cats, horses, reptiles, birds, rodents or whatever always filled our family home. My early working life centred on horses, then agricultural college and extended to working with cattle and sheep in south west NSW. Rehabilitation of sick and injured wildlife emerged around the same time back in the days when no one had any idea how to treat any injured species of wildlife. From there it was bringing up children and off to university at the same time. My own family home began to fill with wildlife patients too. University research opened up another world in conservation of threatened species - and somehow along the way, I ended up at the Port Macquarie Koala Hospital 22 years ago as the Clinical Director.

This job entailed admitting, examining and treating all the koala patients, along with collaborating on a number of research projects, training staff, sitting on advisory panels, writing up documents (hundreds of them), radio tracking released patients and taking part in various koala

'missions' across NSW, Victoria and South Australia. As koalas have been in decline for decades, it has been a dream of mine to put together a breeding program for wild koalas. The 2019/20 bushfires, as awful as they were, enabled this dream to become a reality. So the running of the clinic at the Hospital is now the responsibility of our two wonderful, young and enthusiastic vets and I feel very comfortable the clinic is in great hands. And instead of retiring as planned, I have become Manager of Research and the Wild Koala Breeding Program. The next five years will be a pilot program operated in collaboration with key partners, the first program of its kind in the world working with wild koalas. So watch this space!

## Scott Castle, Conservation Manager



I was always curious about all animals, and when I got the opportunity to study in my 30s, I completed a Bachelor of Science

in Zoology, Ecology and Conservation, with honours in Zoology at Townsville's James Cook University in Queensland. I worked with many different types of animals, with particular interest in birds, reptiles and bats. A highlight was studying microbats in Borneo.

I started volunteering at the Koala Hospital in early 2016, before being offered the position of Assistant Clinical Director in January 2017. During this time I completed a Certificate 3 in Captive Animals. In 2020 I was appointed Conservation Manager for Koala Conservation Australia and Port Macquarie Koala Hospital.

I have the opportunity to be involved in a wide range of operational areas including our koala food tree plantations, managing koala food supply, designing and building enclosures, maintenance and special projects, assisting with the wild koala breeding project, research opportunities into tree care, koala habitat and conservation, social media, management of conservation of KCA properties, overseeing koala rescue training and rescue operations.

Conserving koalas means conserving habitat. KCA can achieve far-reaching ecological outcomes, not just for koalas but for all wildlife living in the diverse forest habitats that koalas call home.

I'm very grateful for the opportunity to make a difference, and I'll cherish this experience always. I'm looking forward to great results from our wild koala breeding project over the coming years, and increases in protected koala habitat on private land across New South Wales.

# PRIME HABITAT SAVED

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**Koala Conservation Australia announced in December that we have partnered with National Parks and Wildlife Service to jointly purchase 194 hectares of prime koala habitat on the Lake Innes Peninsula, Port Macquarie.**

The area of outstanding environmental value within greater Port Macquarie has now been saved from residential and infrastructure development, after more than a year of complex negotiations. The land is also known by the property address, 147 The Ruins Way.

The Lake Innes Peninsula is biologically significant because its moist, fertile, red volcanic soil supports diverse vegetation and a diversity of fauna species. The land is defined as 'Core Koala Habitat' under SEPP (State Environment Planning Policy) 44. Koalas here have been described by Dr Steve Phillips, Koala Ecologist with Biolink, as 'the cornerstone of the most important koala population in Australia'. Between 2012 and 2015 the Wildlife Genomics team at

the Australian Museum analysed samples collected from this specific area by Port Macquarie Koala Hospital and identified this koala population as very genetically diverse, giving these animals national significance.

**This vital habitat is home to a genetically diverse and nationally significant population of koalas.**

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The land is not only important for koalas, it also contains a variety of ecological communities which support a large number of threatened species. Endangered or Critically Endangered animals, listed on BioNet within 2 km of the



*Koala Habitat on the property (as meeting SEPP 44 Criteria) under the Port Macquarie-Hastings Council Draft Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management*



*Looking south over Lake Innes, image courtesy of Port Macquarie Hastings Council.*

site, include nearly forty different species of bats, birds, frogs, insects and mammals. These include the rare regent honeyeater, swift parrot, the vulnerable squirrel glider and greater glider, and the endangered giant dragonfly, one of the largest dragonflies in the world.

## Our contribution to the purchase is funded by public donations received from all over Australia and the world during the Black Summer bushfires.

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There are further key points, which have implications for koala conservation. Studies by the Port Macquarie Koala Hospital have shown the koalas in this area are relatively disease-free, with a low incidence of chlamydia. There is a unique combination of soils and koala feed trees here, ensuring a high carrying capacity for koalas, enabling high genetic diversity so important for the survival of the species. Studies have also shown that this type of cooler, wetter coastal area is likely to become increasingly important for koalas as refuge during warming climatic

conditions. In addition, the area fortunately escaped the 2019 bushfires which burnt large areas of Lake Innes Nature Reserve and surrounding lands. It is important to note that the majority of the larger Lake Innes National Park, which adjoins the area, is low-lying wetland and does not support koala habitat, underlining the importance of 147 The Ruins Way for the species.

Koala Conservation Australia will undertake managed tree planting and wildlife research. In accordance with all licences and regulations, we will have access to both source founders (breeding stock) for the Wild Koala Breeding Program and to release offspring (juvenile koalas).

Chairperson for Koala Conservation Australia, Sue Ashton, said, 'We realised the significance of the area for the conservation of koalas in the Port Macquarie area. If this land had been sold for residential development, we would have lost the Port Macquarie urban koala population. After holding discussions with the National Parks and Wildlife Service for over 15 months to purchase the land, it was a happy day when we were informed that the owner had agreed to their offer and the sale was going through'.



*Some of the endangered species recorded at or near the site. From the top, koala, green and gold bell frog, regent honeyeater, greater glider.*

# MEET OUR NEW CLINIC VETS: ASTRID AND SHALI

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*Shali takes a blood sample from a juvenile.*



*Astrid applies eye medication to a koala in rehabilitation.*

**A few weeks ago, we welcomed two new vets to the Port Macquarie Koala Hospital. Shali and Astrid have been settling into their unique and rather unusual roles and it is now time to introduce these important newcomers.**

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Shali Fischer BVSc, has worked as a small animal vet in a number of locations including MacKay in Queensland, Broken Hill in New South Wales as well as Port Macquarie. A graduate of Sydney University School of Veterinary Science, Shali has always been interested in working with wildlife. Her locum year in Broken Hill featured some particularly memorable work with emus, kangaroos and reptiles! At the Koala Hospital, Shali thrives on the hands-on nature of the work, and interaction with colleagues and volunteers alike. 'For everyone here, it's never just a job. We all want to be here, choose to be here and want to make a difference'.

Astrid Van Aggelen DVM ('Docteur en médecine vétérinaire'), graduated in Lyons, France. Astrid gained considerable experience in small animal emergency work initially in her home country, and when she moved to Australia she began to explore her interest in conservation and wild animal care. 'Here in Australia, we are still in time to conserve many species if we move quickly.' From small animal practice in Coffs Harbour, New South Wales, the move to clinic vet at the Koala Hospital is a big change. Astrid recognises how significant the opportunity is to personally contribute to koala conservation.

Working with a non-domestic species, and one as specialised as the koala excites and challenges both women as they evolve into their roles. More and more valuable information continues to become available, but unlike domestic species, literature is still comparatively limited and there is no quick-reference textbook for vets working with wild koalas. Shali and Astrid are becoming familiar with the Hospital's important network of external specialists who are a wealth of information on specific aspects of koala health, treatments and rehabilitation. Other key staff

and even volunteers at times provide advice to the clinic vets, as their knowledge and experience continues to grow. Even at this early stage, both vets are already providing support and data for external research projects and look forward to contributing much more in that area.

Shali commented, 'One of the most exciting aspects of the role, is having input to the new Koala Hospital and also the wild koala breeding facility which we are developing at Cowarra. This world-first program is so important for

the survival of the species, and there is so much collaborative work involved in getting it right.'

Astrid highlighted 'population medicine' as another fascinating aspect. 'With wild koalas, we are looking at long term goals for the future of all koalas, rather than focussing purely on the health of individuals. It's very different to working with domestic animals.'

Both Clinic Vets have already identified focus areas. Shali enjoys the practical, problem-solving side of working with wild koalas, with priority on continually reviewing

and improving standards of care and outcomes in cases of trauma and disease. Treating koalas with antibiotics for chlamydia is particularly challenging and a positive outcome is never assured; Shali is keen to find ways to increase the vital gut health of koalas whilst they are on antibiotics.

Astrid also noted the importance of screening. 'We already have some great equipment at the Hospital including ultrasound scanners, and hopefully more will become available to us in time. We are always open to equipment donations, from organisations including human and animal health facilities! Diagnostics like ultrasound and pathology services are vital to increasing knowledge around chlamydia, how it's transmitted, how infectious different stages of the disease are. We need to increase our knowledge around ongoing signs and symptoms of disease in wild koalas and understand if and when animals are safe to release, in terms of infection control.' Astrid also hopes to carry out research which will help standardise koala care and improve protocols for managing different diseases.



*Astrid and Shali using ultrasound to assess a sick patient.*

# 24/7 KOALA RESCUE

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The Port Macquarie Koala Hospital operates emergency koala rescue 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. How do we do this?

Amazingly, all our rescuers and the people that answer the emergency phone line are volunteers. We are lucky to have dedicated people who understand the importance of rescuing sick or injured koalas whenever possible, and who want to make a personal contribution to the conservation of the species.

*'I believe this work is crucial, we literally need to save every koala we can.'* (Rescuer, Dale Cooper)

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The commitment is significant – training in rescue protocols, operating the overnight phone line, being ready and available to drop everything and head out rain or shine, day or night to assess koalas and if necessary bring them into care, also dealing with the trauma rescuers experience during some rescues. Calls to the emergency line usually come in from members of the public who have seen a koala with signs of disease or trauma (most commonly car accident or dog attack). Koalas can be found in dangerous or unsuitable locations. These koalas are sometimes brought in to the Hospital for a health check, or in some circumstances may be quickly relocated to a safe area nearby.

*It's not easy to rescue a koala but the rewards are huge. After a rescue, I follow their progress through rehabilitation. And their obvious joy when they go back to the wild, it's priceless.* (Rescuer, Carol Dalton)

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Although koalas look gentle and easy-going from a distance, this can change when humans approach. Even when sick or injured, a wild koala will regard a human as a serious threat, and they will do everything they can to escape capture. They are superbly

adapted for arboreal life, and have excellent climbing 'equipment' including long sharp claws and well-muscled limbs. Once they think they are in danger, a koala can move like a monkey in terms of speed and expertise in the trees.

*We really value the members of the public who phone in about koalas needing help, and support them as much as we can. It can be middle of the night, lovely people who really care can be very distressed.* (Rescuer and phone operator, Kathryn Reardon)

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Our rescuers have learned how to safely and skilfully approach koalas. Our aim is to get close enough to initially assess the animal's condition. We consider the observations of the person who called in the rescue, if there are no signs of injury or illness, we will leave the koala if it is safe to do so. When a koala requires capture, our skilled rescuers proceed with great consideration for the koala's safety.

Our rescue technique involves carefully encouraging the koala down from the tree and capturing it in a large, thick cotton bag. When a koala is too high to reach with our telescopic poles, we engage our volunteers who go to great heights to bring animals



down. One of our rescuers is a trained tree climber, using a harness and ropes; and another operates an elevated work platform to capture koalas. When a rescue is carried out successfully, there is no direct human contact with the koala, instead we use a capture bag and carry basket only. This is for the health and safety of our rescuers in addition to the wellbeing and respect for the wild koala.

We transport koalas in specially made cages with a cloth cover over the outside to reduce visual stimuli. It is important to respect koalas as wild animals. We do not pat, stroke or talk to koalas. They are not pet animals and can find us incredibly frightening. While koalas may sit still, or slowly walk away when approached by humans or other animals, despite appearances they do not do so calmly. Small signs of fear and distress, such as rapid, shallow breathing, show us that the koala is releasing adrenalin which can compound ill-health.

*I am committed to helping these animals which amazingly still live amongst us in Port Macquarie. Rescue work was so hard and tough during the Black Summer bushfire season here and in other parts of NSW. The tragic loss I witnessed strengthened my resolve to help any way I can. (Jeremy Bear, Rescue Coordinator and rescuer)*

## IF YOU SEE A KOALA IN DISTRESS...

- Call the Port Macquarie Koala Hospital on 02 6584 1522 if you are on the Mid North Coast of NSW. In other areas contact your local wildlife rescue organisation.
- Follow the instructions of the phone operator.
- Stay at the scene until rescuers arrive. Keep the koala in your line of sight if possible.
- Minimise stress to the koala. Noise and activity, human touch and talking will all frighten the koala.

# VALE, DR JOANNA GRIFFITH

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## *By Cheyne Flanagan*

In late 2004 the University of Sydney, the Australian Research Council, Australian Koala Foundation, Boehringer Ingelheim and Port Macquarie Koala Hospital initiated what was considered the biggest wildlife research project of its time with a total cost of 1.5 million dollars to be invested. The announcement made both international and national news.

The project was to mainly focus on treating koalas for chlamydia with the work to be undertaken by a young enthusiastic veterinarian and PhD student called Joanna Griffith who I will call 'Jo'.

The Port Macquarie Koala Hospital's contribution was classed as 'in kind'. This included access to all the admitted koala patients, use of the facilities, assistance from the volunteers and 30 hours per week of the Clinical Director's time.

In 2005, under the supervision of Associate Professor Damien Higgins, Professor Mark Krockenberger, Professor Paul Canfield and Associate Professor Merran Govendir, a very long and very intensive workload began. Jo spent 7 days a week for 4-6 weeks at a time collecting samples, doing health screens under anaesthesia and postmortem exams. Then Jo packed up and drove back to Sydney University

for another 4-6 weeks to process the samples, then back again to the Koala Hospital. This cycle continued into late 2008. During this time, Jo became very much part of the Koala Hospital team, becoming very adept at capturing and handling koalas, identifying eucalypt species and understanding wild koala behaviour all whilst still focusing on the task at hand.

So let's delve into her PhD project and how it evolved and expanded.

Drug therapies for treating koalas for the disease chlamydia is complicated. One of the major outcomes of Jo's work was finding that many drug therapies given to koalas were ineffective and not reaching good serum levels in the blood. This means they were simply not doing the job, not killing off the bacteria responsible and were basically ineffective long term. The koalas 'super liver' which is an amazing organ for dealing with the toxins in eucalypt foliage, is detrimental in allowing koalas to respond to treatment. All of this work was done in collaboration with the amazing team headed by Associate Professor Merran Govendir's pharmacokinetics laboratory at the University of Sydney, which to put it in layman's terms, showed how drugs work in the body. It also found that some drugs given orally were



*Dr Joanna Griffith in 2005 with one of her beloved koalas.*

metabolised and excreted before they were effective. Some drugs that did (and still do) show some efficacy, were only effective when given by injectable administration, either subcutaneous (under the skin) or intramuscular (into the muscle layer).

## The work that Jo Griffith did changed the course of koala medicine.

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Jo also did an analysis of the risk factors that cause koalas to be admitted into care, for example the age and sex of the koala certainly influenced low or high risk. All of this analysis was undertaken using the Port Macquarie Koala Hospital's annual admission data which of course goes right back to 1973. There are a number of valuable scientific papers in this area of research that were authored by Jo and are still referenced today.

Jo's work also included looking at evidence-based medicine as criteria for diagnostics and drug therapies. Again, this work has become the foundation of so many current research projects.

Joanna Griffith was awarded her PhD in 2010 and we were all so very proud.

This work in koala rehabilitation and wildlife conservation continued with Jo being an active contributor to the Australian Wildlife Diseases Association, and a strong passionate supporter and advocate for koala rehabilitation, particularly in South Australia. Jo continued in research, sitting on advisory panels and contributing to koala health right up till only a few weeks ago.

Understandably Jo and I became very close during her three years with us and we have remained in constant contact ever since and I have always valued her counsel and friendship.

Jo said to me about six months ago that 'I was her koala teacher and mentor', a statement I was totally humbled by. I have always

been in awe of Joanna Griffith who I consider one of the most intelligent scientists I have ever known, and who has contributed so much to understanding koala disease, drug therapies and koala rehabilitation. All her amazing work will be referenced and sourced for many years to come.

Jo lost her battle to breast cancer on the 1 February 2022 at the age of 45, a journey we all went on as well. Jo is survived by her life partner Simon and two beautiful little boys. Life is so cruel at times.

When you hear the wind rustling the leaves high up in the treetops, listen closely for this is the sound of the spirit of the koala calling to you. Now when we hear this gentle sound, there is another spirit up there who has joined them.



*Jo checking the weight of a Hospital patient.*

# RETURN TO THE WILD

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*Amelia has passed all her milestones. Bella's striking eyes. Freddae shows how high she can climb.*

## Preparing joeys and juveniles for release

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Joeys (koalas up to 12 months of age) and juveniles (koalas approximately 12 - 24 months of age) are still learning to climb, search for suitable leaf and form social dynamics that are essential to their survival as adults. At Port Macquarie Koala Hospital, we have a dedicated pre-release yard which acts as a 'bootcamp' for the young koalas which have been in home care, or present to us too young for immediate release.

Currently, we have one joey and three juveniles in the yard – Lighthouse Road Amelia, Roto Freddae, Blair Reserve Maxine and Regent Street Bella. Freddae is a

feisty female who self-admitted herself into the hospital, simply walking up the aisle of the rehabilitation area one morning! Maxine was rescued a few months ago after being found sitting on the ground, lethargic and not doing well. Covered in blood and fly-blown, she had a heavy tick burden causing anaemia. Maxine was successfully treated in home care and is nearly ready for release. Amelia is an orphan, found by the side of busy road, and after a stint in home care has met all her milestones during bootcamp. Bella is our newest recruit to the yard and the youngest of the group, and stands out with her haematochromia (one blue and one brown eye).

Once the joeys/juveniles meet the criteria for release (suitable body

weight, no evidence of disease and exhibiting appropriate wild behaviours) they are microchipped and ear tagged, and we go on the hunt for an appropriate release location. These locations need to have established populations of low density, a known dispersing koala presence, appropriate and healthy koala feed trees, minimal habitat fragmentation and low risk for interaction with domestic animals, livestock and road traffic.

Our current group of juveniles will soon be released together, while they are still young enough to safely 'fly under the radar' and not pose a threat to larger, mature koalas in the social hierarchy of the local population.

# GIRL SCOUTS REACH OUT ACROSS THE MILES

Girl Scouts in Wisconsin Southeast, USA, have chosen the Port Macquarie Koala Hospital to be the recipient of their philanthropic donations in 2022.



*Girl Scouts of Wisconsin Southeast enjoying the recent Zoom call with the Koala Hospital.*

The Girl Scout Cookie Program is iconic in the United States. It's a major initiative that supports girls to learn, grow and thrive through adventure. Girl Scouts run their own cookie businesses, learning about money-management, decision-making and business ethics. In the process, they also make a myriad of experiences possible from challenging camping trips and epic treks, to STEM projects that inspire them to change the world. Each year a theme is chosen for the Cookie Program. Last year for example, it was 'Bee Amazing' with bees, so critical for our environment and food, as the mascot. We were surprised and delighted to hear that in 2022, the Girl Scout Cookie Bakers that

produce Girl Scouts Cookies in America chose the theme 'Climb with Courage' with the Australian native koala as the mascot!

Recently Girl Scouts of Wisconsin Southeast came together for an exciting Zoom call with our clinic vets, Shali and Astrid, and Cheyne Flanagan. Each year a major event during the program is the Cookie Rally, and owing to COVID it's once more a virtual event. So the Zoom call was recorded to enable it to be a feature piece of the Virtual Cookie Rally. The girls had the chance to ask our vets questions about koalas, an animal which few of them would have been able to encounter! They were keen to know if koalas are dangerous, what

they eat, how far do they travel in the wild, baby koalas and how the mother cares for them, and about the work of the Hospital. Our vets were impressed by the level of thought which the girls had put into the questions and the level of interactive learning during the call. A young koala called Diago even made a brief appearance on the call. A major topic of discussion was how and why koalas are in danger, and what Girl Scouts can do to help protect koalas.

We are awed and humbled that this year Girl Scouts in the USA have chosen to learn about koalas on the other side of the world, and how they can make a difference to their survival!

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## Koala Emergency Rescue Line - Phone (02) 6584 1522

If you sight a koala in distress - call our  
Rescue Line 24 hours a day / 7 days a week

E: [info@koalahospital.org.au](mailto:info@koalahospital.org.au)    

General Enquiries: 02 6584 1522

[www.koalahospital.org.au](http://www.koalahospital.org.au)

# KOALA TREE GIVEAWAY 2022

Every tree counts for koalas. Habitat loss is the main reason for koala population decline. Other factors such as vehicle strikes, dog attacks and even disease are a direct result, or a symptom of habitat loss.

In a joint initiative with Forestry Corporation of NSW, we are offering free koala food trees to local individuals, rural land owners, schools and businesses. We would like locals to plant these seedlings anywhere there is space for a tree to flourish and provide future food for our koalas.

As we have done for the past four years, this year we will give away 25,000 trees of different species to suit different soil and habitat locations. Some of the tree species include tallowwood, grey gum, forest red gum and swamp mahogany. Seedlings will be available from the Port Macquarie Koala Hospital. We also offer tree planting guides, with information on how to plant the trees and care for them to help them thrive.

With koala habitat under ever increasing threat from urban development, this revegetation project will help re-establish habitat or link existing habitat for our local koala populations. We encourage private landholders to get involved, and plant as many seedlings as they can.

**Trees will be available from late March,  
and the Giveaway will continue until all  
trees are distributed.**

**Visit [www.koalahospital.org.au](http://www.koalahospital.org.au) to  
register for your trees.**

Help support  
koalas for  
generations to  
come - because  
their future is in  
our hands!



*Forests of seedling trees in the making.*