

Northern Rivers Koala Friendly Schools

A PROJECT LINKING NORTHERN RIVERS PRIMARY & CENTRAL SCHOOLS
WITH FRIENDS OF THE KOALA, INC.

Koalas Need Help

In NSW, koalas are classed as a vulnerable species. That means they are likely to become endangered unless threats to them are eliminated. An endangered species is one that is likely to become extinct. So our local koalas could disappear altogether, and the situation just to our north in SE Queensland is just as dire.

The main threats to koalas are loss of habitat (the stress of which is probably increasing the prevalence of disease), dog attacks, & road injury or death.

Friends of the Koala

Friends of the Koala is a non-profit community group run by volunteers dedicated to conserving koalas in the Northern Rivers.



Volunteer rehabilitators operate a 24-hour rescue service for sick, injured and orphaned koalas. Koalas are cared for in home care or at the Koala Care Centre on Rifle Range Rd, Lismore. Critically ill koalas are transferred to the Australian Wildlife Hospital in Beerwah, Qld.

A native plant nursery is attached to the Care Centre providing koala food trees for free to local landholders. The proceeds from other native plant sales go towards the cost of koala care.

Friends of the Koala plays an active role in promoting habitat restoration in the Northern Rivers Region. This includes encouraging landholders to commit to new plantings and maintaining remnant vegetation.

The group supports research, in particular in the prevalence of disease in koala populations and in mapping current koala populations and their distribution.



Koalas & Schools

The aims of this project are to:

- raise awareness in the community of the plight of local koalas;
- generate funds & in-kind support for koala conservation;
- augment the K-6 curriculum with real-life relevant study;
- provide students with opportunities for hands-on environmental involvement; &
- link schools with community groups.

How Can Schools Be Involved?

JOIN UP

A good place to start is for your school to become a member of Friends of the Koala. For \$20 you will not only help the organisation, but also remain informed through the *Treetops* newsletter. Each school will receive individualised advice on how they could best aid the survival of local koalas.

WRITE A KOALA PLAN INTO YOUR SEMP

Consult with FOK volunteers regarding strategies your school could implement. This may involve establishing or augmenting habitat, planting food trees for leaf harvesting, growing seedlings for sale or Landcare projects, etc. Factors such as your school's location, the size & condition of grounds, & risk management will determine what is most appropriate.

Use the attached table of outcomes to assist in incorporating koala education into your curriculum. The websites listed provide good support material. In addition, the Koala Care Centre is available for excursions, so students can experience first-hand the work being done there, & meet the patients. Fund-raising events could also be incorporated into the plan.

FUND RAISING

It can cost over \$20 a week to provide the food that a sick koala needs. Medications and supplements can be a further \$20 a week for a koala requiring a standard chlamydial treatment. If there are any complications or specialised veterinary care is necessary then the costs increase rapidly. To raise a young orphan koala costs several hundred dollars in specialised milk formulas as koala joeys are in care for many months. Building a suitable enclosure for housing koalas costs a minimum of \$500 for materials alone.

Students could organise special fund-raising events to sponsor individual koalas or to assist the Care Centre in general. Appropriate days for such events in 2009 are:

- 21 March - World Forestry Day
- 22 April - Earth Day
- 22 May - International Biodiversity Day
- 5 June - World Environment Day
- 31 July - Schools Tree Day
- September - Save the Koala Month
- 7 September - National Threatened Species Day
- 25 September - Save the Koala Day
- 5 October - World Habitat Day

VOLUNTEER

Volunteering with FOK may mean as little as two hours a week working hands-on in the Care Centre, medicating and feeding koalas. Training sessions are held to assist volunteers and are a requirement for volunteers wishing to home care. Volunteering does require a certain level of commitment but it is well worth it for the moments you will be able to experience working with these special animals. Staff or others (over 16) may consider this.

WEBSITES

<http://www.friendsofthekoala.org/fok/>

<http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/npws.nsf/Content/The+koala>

http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/nature_conservation/wildlife/koala_plan/fact_sheets/

CURRICULUM

COGS Unit: Effects of growth and change. Students can investigate koala population and distribution, and how they are affected by development.

Stage	Strand/Unit	Outcomes & Indicators	HSIE Links
Early Stage 1	Living Things	<p>LT ES1.3 Identifies ways in which living things are different and have different needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sorts pictures into groups of living and non-living things • identifies the different parts of animals that help them to observe, e.g. eyes, nose • sorts animal models and/or plant pictures according to differences and similarities, i.e. in relation to appearance, habitat, movement, food • designs a habitat for koalas, following a visit to the Koala Hospital, and explains how it suits the animal's needs. 	<p><u>Places We Know</u> ENES1: Gathers information about natural & built environments & communicates some of the ways in which they interact with, & can care for, these environments</p>
Stage 1	Kids Care	<p>LT S1.3 Identifies and describes ways in which living things grow and change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collaboratively writes, illustrates and publishes a literary recount about the needs of growing animals, e.g. koalas • proposes questions for an expert when evaluating plans for an animal environment, e.g. a koala-friendly playground. 	<p><u>Wet and Dry Environments</u> ENS1.5 Compares and contrasts natural and built features in their local area and the ways in which people interact with these features. ENS1.6 Demonstrates an understanding of the relationship between environments and people.</p>
Stage 2	Our Australia	<p>LT S2.3 Identifies and describes the structure and function of living things and ways in which living things interact with other living things and their environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • observes and reports on a local environment, describing how plants and animals rely on each other • designs and makes a model of a settlement suited to a particular environment with consideration for the interactions of living things, e.g. koalas, dogs, cars • designs, makes and uses a database to record information on selected flora and fauna (e.g. koalas & their food trees) 	<p><u>Australia: You're Standing in It</u> ENS2.5 Describes places in the local area and other parts of Australia and explains their significance. ENS2.6 Describes people's interactions with environments and identifies responsible ways of interacting with environments.</p>
Stage 3	Environment Matters	<p>LT S3.3 Identifies, describes and evaluates the interactions between living things and their effects on the environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • plans and manages the construction of a bush food/vegetable garden, identifying and resolving the need for funds and expert advice • develops a detailed plan to conserve or improve a local nature reserve/park using a simple scale, symbols and annotations 	<p><u>State & Federal Government</u> Implications for Learning: In this unit, students have opportunities to accept civic responsibility through community involvement.</p>