

Koala FAQs

Frequently asked questions



Photo by KoalaTracker – member photo
koalatracker.com.au



What trees do Koalas feed from?

Koalas feed almost exclusively on the leaves of Eucalyptus trees and a small handful of other species. In Port Stephens 3 tree species have been identified as preferred by Koalas for feeding:

- Forest Red Gum (*Eucalyptus tereticornis*)
- Parramatta Red Gum (*Eucalyptus parramattensis* subsp. *decadens*)
- Swamp Mahogany (*Eucalyptus robusta*)

All native vegetation in our area, including natives in backyards, plays an important role in providing connectivity and sheltering habitat for Koalas.

What does a Koala sound like?

During the breeding season (August to February) and predominantly during the evening, both female and male Koalas can be heard bellowing calls looking to attract a mate. Koalas produce deep bellowing or grunting sounds by using a special sound-producing organ called a descended larynx (which holds the vocal cords).

What does Koala scat (poop) look like?

Koala scat looks a lot like the pips of large olives in terms of shape and size, and has a strong smell of Eucalyptus, even when dry. Koalas produce these little pellets 24 hours a day, even when they're asleep – a healthy koala produces 100-250 pellets a day. Be careful not to confuse the scats of Koala with the similarly sized and shaped scats of the Brushtail Possum. Possum scats are typically smaller and have a strong musky odor, not found in Koala scat.

What do Koala scratchings look like?

Koalas have very sharp claws with 2 opposable thumbs on their front feet, and one opposable thumb without a claw on their back feet – essential for climbing trees. When climbing, Koalas leave behind characteristic scratches in the bark, which remain visible until the bark is shed each year, allowing you to gauge how frequently Koalas use that particular tree. Rough barked trees that have been regularly climbed by Koalas may also have the outer layer of weathered bark scratched away, exposing the fresh layer beneath. Koalas may leave distinctive scratches on the trees they climb. These scratches are more visible on smooth-barked trees and may look like two lines parallel at an angle above smaller random scratches or pock-like marks.



How do I tell the difference between a male and female Koala?

Adult male Koalas are noticeably larger than adult female Koalas, with longer heads and distinctly larger black noses. Male Koalas also have a large scent gland on their chest which looks like a dark vertical mark down the middle of their upper chest which they rub against trees as they climb to mark their territory. Adult female Koalas have a relatively clean white chest and a backward facing pouch for their young. Their faces are a little flatter and their noses a little smaller.

What's in the Koala's backyard?

Did you know the Koala is an umbrella/flagship species? An umbrella or flagship species is a term used in conservation biology to describe a species that requires the same habitat or ecosystem as other species. The concept is based on the idea that by protecting and conserving the habitat of an umbrella species, many other species that inhabit the same ecosystem, such as other marsupials, birds, and reptiles, will also be protected.

What are common threats to Koalas?

Cars – Koala road strikes are a major threat to Koalas, with numerous Koalas killed by cars each year. Did you know that Port Stephens has one of the highest number of Koala road fatalities in NSW? When you're on the road, please be aware that Koalas are more active between dusk and dawn, particularly during warmer months when they're breeding. If you hit a Koala, call the Port Stephens Koala Hospital (PSKH) 24hr Koala Rescue Number – 1800 PS KOALAS (1800 775 625) and report it

straight away. There may be a joey in the mother's pouch or in a nearby tree. Do not encourage injured Koalas to climb up trees – they can climb even with fractured bones. Secure injured Koalas by covering them with a laundry basket, box, towel, jacket, or blanket, and hold it in a safe place until rescuers arrive.

Dog attacks – Dogs bites can be fatal if the wound is not cleaned and antibiotics given to prevent infection. Koalas do not bleed profusely, so the wound may not be obvious. Keep your dog on a lead when you're out and about, and keep them away from gum trees at night. Lock your dogs up at night time to reduce the risk of them attacking Koalas in your backyard. Dog trainers recommend putting Koala scat in your dog's bedding to normalise the scent of koalas which may prevent dogs from wanting to chase or bark at them.

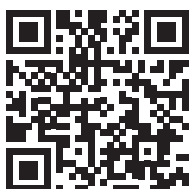
How do I know if a Koala is sick or injured?




When Koalas are sick they will often sit on the ground or stay in low tree branches. They may have wet, brown dirty bottoms or crusty weeping red eyes, may appear lethargic.

Who do I call to report a sick or injured Koala?

If you see an unwell or injured Koala please don't approach or touch it, keep an eye on the animal and call the Port Stephens Koala Hospital (PSKH). PSKH volunteers are available to help and rescue Koalas at any time of the day or night.

24hr Koala Rescue Number – 1800 PS KOALAS (1800 775 625).



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