



GUM TIPS

The Koala Hospital Newsletter



Issue 2008 No. 1

March 2008

Koala Preservation Society of NSW. Inc. PO Box 236 Port Macquarie NSW 2444 Australia
(02) 6584 1522 Fax (02) 6584 2399

Web Page: www.koalahospital.org.au Email: info@koalahospital.org.au



Birthday Girl

INCLUDED IN THIS ISSUE

- Ø Cover Story – Birthday Girl
- Ø Maree Austin – What goes around comes around
- Ø Open Day Photos – A great success, thanks to the Friends of the Koala hospital
- Ø Hospital Report – Koala admissions



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Birthday Girl

For sometime now, we have been treating a very old koala called “Birthday Girl” (why she was called this remains a mystery) who had developed quite advanced arthritis in her hindquarters.

This grand old lady first came into the hospital for a “check and relocation” in February 1990 as a young adult of approximately 2 years of age. If you do your maths here, this puts Birthday Girl at around 20 years old now, which is no mean feat for any koala, let alone one whose home range has been on one of Port Macquarie’s busiest arterial roads.

We are sure there are plenty of older human folk who would be nodding in full agreement that arthritis is both crippling and very painful. Poor old Birthday Girl was certainly showing signs that her worn out joints were causing her pain and misery. After a series of radiographs (Xrays) of her hindquarters were done, there was certainly evidence of diseased joints, so we decided to trial a particular anti inflammatory drug on her to see what effect it would have.

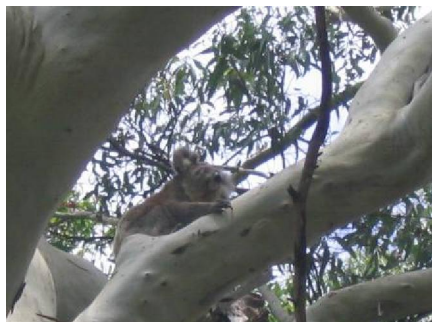
The results so far have been quite interesting to say the least. Even though it took some time, Birthday Girl has gone from a koala virtually unable to move more than a few feet along her gunyah to one able to climb a tree (albeit very slowly!!!).

Unfortunately this anti-inflammatory drug doesn’t heal the arthritis, but it is definitely having a great effect on the level of pain she is feeling, which is wonderful.

So much so, that the staff at the hospital simply couldn’t find Birthday Girl anywhere one Monday morning. Everyone searched on and off all day with no sighting of her both within the Koala Hospital and outside in the grounds of the Macquarie Nature Reserve.

How on earth could a 20 year old koala with chronic arthritis get out of Yard 9 (considering Yard 9 is pretty well escape proof)? Impossible!!!!

After a number of days of continual searching, a big fluffy brown coated koala was spotted very high up a tree just outside Yard 9. Birthday Girl?? No it couldn’t be!!!!



One of the main concerns was that the effects of the anti – inflammatory would definitely have worn off and therefore she would be in crippling pain again and therefore unable to come down the tree. A trap was set around the tree to catch the koala. It was also obvious that she was far too high for a cherry picker to get her (this is of course if the koala was indeed her, as it was so high up and therefore very difficult to see who it was).

Eventually after a number of days, the koala had come down to visible range and we were pretty comfortable that it was indeed her, but she was still too high for a cherry picker.

So what did we do???? We called in the “Port Tree Fella” (one of the local arborist/tree lopper businesses), who do our trimming of trees at the Koala Hospital and who often supplies us with wood chip and helps us out in times of need.

Peter Berecny (the owner of the business) and his team came virtually straight away when hearing of our plight. Peter decided that even though he still had “plenty of Christmas pudding around his middle” and was rather unfit, that he would climb the tree himself and bring Birthday Girl down for us.



After a quick lesson in capturing koalas using canvas bags, Peter climbed into his abseiling harness, attached the bag and began to climb. His trusty team members controlled the ropes and guided him to where Birthday Girl was curled up in the fork of a branch – still very high up the tree. Of course, by this time a number of visitors and tourists had gathered with videos and cameras flashing away.



The “Christmas pudding belly” didn’t seem to have caused Peter any problems and he eventually arrived just above the curled up koala. The fact the koala did not move certainly suggested it was indeed Birthday Girl, and this was confirmed with a quick scratch behind those fluffy ears.

Before we knew it, Birthday Girl was very professionally captured and bundled into the canvas bag, which then began its descent to the ground on a long rope. When that bag was finally opened we don’t know who was more surprised and relieved – Birthday Girl or us!!!!



She was then taken up to the treatment room for assessment, weighed and given a good hearty feed of formula (which she grabbed with great gusto). Overall Birthday Girl looked pretty good in spite of her misadventure, having lost only a small amount of weight.



Peter and his team came in to see the results of their efforts and were indeed very pleased, as we were very grateful for all that they did.

Birthday Girl is now “back on her medication” and has been transferred to another yard (which we deem is definitely escape proof) and we will continue to observe and learn from the interaction of this drug on arthritic koalas.



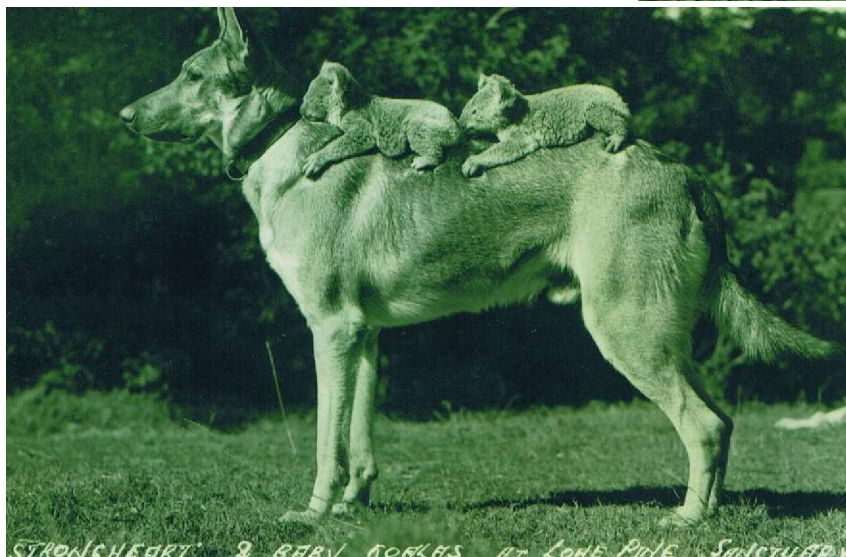
Two questions have resulted from all of this:

1. How on earth did a 20 year old koala with arthritis get out of such a huge high fenced escape proof yard in the first place?
2. How on earth do we get through to some of older volunteers that NO you can’t have some of this wonder drug for your own arthritis!!!!!!

WHAT GOES AROUND COMES AROUND.....

If we can cast our memories back to November 2006, there was an article in Gum Tips about a visitor to the hospital who gave us some photos of a very small girl at Lone Pine Sanctuary in Queensland many many years ago standing beside a German Shepherd dog called "Braveheart".

Braveheart was that very unusual magic dog who "mothered" and allowed both orphaned joeys and young koalas to cling onto his back and to ride around the Sanctuary under his care. For obvious reasons this is not something that is to be encouraged, as the



average dog is more likely to not treat the koala with any respect at all, but for some reason Braveheart was a one in a million animal.

The little girl in the picture has always had a fascination with koalas and her wish was to return to Lone Pine Sanctuary and actually hold a koala – a difficulty for someone who lived in the USA. This goal she achieved three times (with a large number of years between each visit!).

A few years ago that "small child" of many years ago, decided to return to Australia permanently and ended up

living here in Port Macquarie. And of course, with the love of koalas foremost in her heart, that's how she ended up visiting the Koala Hospital nearly two years ago and giving us the photos of her childhood



visit to Lone Pine Sanctuary.

Question: Where would someone who has had a pilgrimage throughout life of visiting koalas end up volunteering their time???? The Koala Hospital of course!!! The lady in question – is Maree Austin of course who works the afternoon shift in the shop and regularly visits the patients to still get her "fix" of koala!!!

Now isn't that a fascinating story.....





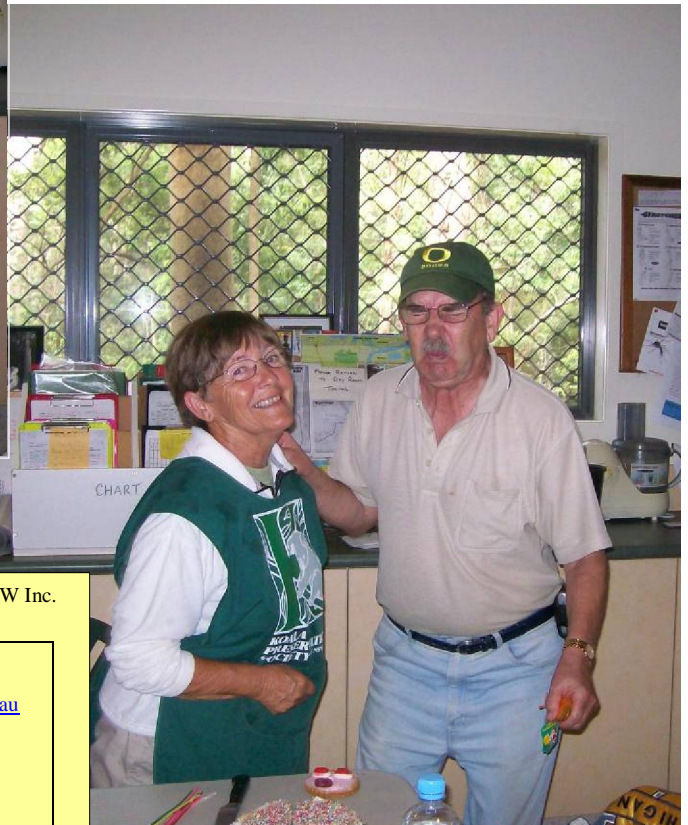
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HAS CUPID'S BOW FIRED AN ARROW HERE??



Gum Tips is the official newsletter of the Koala Preservation Society of NSW Inc.
PO Box 236, Port Macquarie 2444 www.koalahospital.org.au

Management Committee

President	Bob Sharpham	president@koalahospital.org.au
Vice President	Herbie King	vicepresident@koalahospital.org.au
Secretary	Mary Stewart	secretary@koalahospital.org.au
Treasurer	John Barber	treasurer@koalahospital.org.au

Coordinators:

Hospital	Peter Schulties	info@koalahospital.org.au
Habitat	Chris Rowlands	habitat@koalahospital.org.au
Education	Julian Jules	education@koalahospital.org.au
Media	Carol Blecha	media@koalahospital.org.au
Maintenance	Brian Westoby	maintenance@koalahospital.org.au
Friends of the Koala Hospital	Geoff Best	friends@koalahospital.org.au

Hospital Tel: (02) 6584 1522 Fax: (02) 6584 2399 info@koalahospital.org.au

Hospital Supervisor	Cheyne Flanagan	supervisor@koalahospital.org.au
Adoptions	Lorraine Best	adoption@koalahospital.org.au
Souvenir Kiosk	Hazel Sellers	info@koalahospital.org.au

Gum Tips Editor: Cheyne Flanagan 6584 1522 info@koalahospital.org.au

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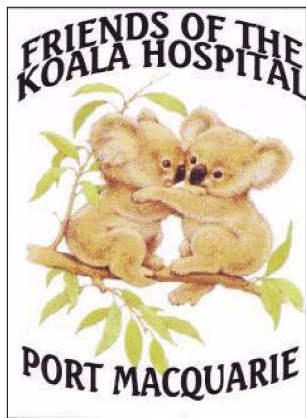
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NO!
IT WAS PETER'S BIRTHDAY AND WE DARED HIM TO KISS THE NEAREST "GIRL" WHO JUST HAPPENED TO BE THE "LITTLE LEPRACHAUN"

- ANNE WALSH

WE DON'T KNOW WHO GOT THE BIGGEST FRIGHT.....



OPEN DAY AT THE KOALA HOSPITAL

March 22, 2008



Jules testing the food!!



our own
Bill Lane
6585 1579



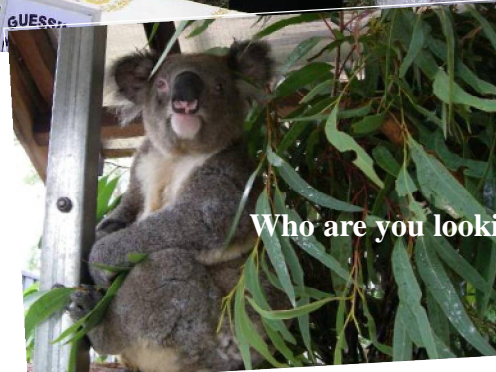
Brigitte &
Herbie dance
up a storm



Sing Australia



Carol extracting money



Who are you looking at?





Look up in the sky.... Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's a koala in a tree!!

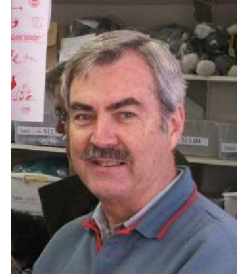


From the President

What a fabulous day the Open Day was. My sincere thanks to the 'Friends of the Koala Hospital' and to our Volunteers and supporters. About \$7,000 was raised to put toward the Koala Ambulance. We have been fundraising since June last year and are now close to reaching our goal. A tremendous effort for making the day a huge success exceeding previous years.

The ambulance will mean that volunteers won't have to use their own car for rescues and the visual impact of an Ambulance on local roads will help the community realise that koalas are vulnerable and they need to be on the lookout for injured or sick koalas.

Your donation towards the Ambulance would get it on the road sooner rather than later; we need to get it on the road now.



Bob Sharpham



President

president@koalahospital.org.au

THE SUPERVISORS' REPORT



Hospital admissions have been quite constant over the last few months, with chlamydial infection being the number one culprit. As is common with the end of the breeding season, we have had a number of "wet bottom" cases, some of which have not only been quite severe but are affecting quite young female koalas also. Sadly, euthanasia is the only answer as these koalas are "too far gone" in their level of disease. We have also had a number of eye infections which thankfully has a higher rate of success. The hospital has also admitted a few dog attacks over the last few months which has been surprising considering dog attacks have dropped so much over the last few years with what we were hoping was good education of dog owners. As a result we are now trialling a letterbox drop of the streets around where the koala was attacked to not only let homeowners know what has occurred but to help them understand what they need to do to prevent future events happening - hopefully this will be helpful.

On a more positive note, we certainly have had some successful releases of early stage chlamydial infected koalas which is great. Our original view that injectable antibiotics are the best method to employ certainly seems to be confirmed by koalas coming up negative at the end of their medication period.

Over the last few months we have had the pleasure of having the head sonographer from Mid Coast Diagnostic Imaging, Noni Collins working with us when we are ultrasounding our koalas. Its been so good having a "maestro" giving us tips and better ways to use the ultrasound machine and this is making the diagnostic work so much easier. Noni is doing a case study on one of our wet bottom koalas and is doing a presentation at a human ultrasound conference in April on the Koala Hospital, what we do and showing the progress on one particular koala (the koala is Excelray Gemma). The participants at this conference have no idea that one of the presenters is going to put a koala's reproductive tract and case history up on the screen - wont they get a shock!!!! Interestingly too, the case study koala "Excelray Gemma" is named after the very first ultrasound we were donated way back in 2001 by the medical company Excelray in Sydney with "Gemma" named after a sweet little girl who sadly died of leukaemia.

Sydney Uni's first drug trial work at the hospital has finished and we are looking forward to a new research season and a new student starting in September this year. The hospital also now has bookings for various TAFE students, work experience students and other researchers coming to do workshops etc with us this year, plus we are booked to do workshops for other wildlife groups in the state. The hospital has also been invited to participate in a meeting in Melbourne of a number of vets, National Parks officials, Sydney University and representatives of four wildlife groups next month to put together a national bushfire burns protocol for koalas. Exciting times ahead.

Cheers, **Cheyne Flanagan**
Hospital Supervisor.



ADOPT-A-WILD-KOALA

www.koalahospital.org.au





Barbara Barrett

HOSPITAL REPORT



ADMISSION	NAME	REASON	RESULT
6.11.00	Kempsey Carolina F	Head Trauma—Motor Vehicle Accident	Permanent Resident
11.10.01	Bonnie Fire F	Bushfire Victim	Permanent Resident
22.10.04	Tractive Golfer M	Underweight – scoliosis of spine	Treating
	Birthday Girl	Severe Arthritis Right Hip	Treating
21.01.06	Wiruna Lucky F	Cataracts both eyes	Treating
27.07.07	Ocean Joseph M	Motor Vehicle Accident	Euthanased 16.01.08
06.10.07	Oxley Cori F Joey	Taken into home care	Rearing
01.08.07	Tinkerbelle F Joey	Underweight	Died 7.12.07
05.11.07	Cathie Gower	Chlamydia	Released 19.12.07
24.10.07	Settlers Inn Casey Joey	Abandoned	Rearing
08.10.07	Salamander Bay Josie	Dog Attack	Released 07.12.07
16.11.07	Lighthouse Barry	@ eye conjunctivitis	Euthanased 5.12.07
10.12.07	Oxley Denise F	Chlamydia	Treating
11.12.07	Regatta Lanaye F	Lethargic	Released 07.02.08
12.12.07	Warrego Martin M	Anaemic	Released 18.01.08
13.12.07	Bay Street Macca M	Lesion (L) Eye	Self Release 21.12.07
14.12.07	Links Jasper M	Motor Vehicle Accident	Euthanased 14.12.07
16.12.07	Newport Bridge Gloria F	Chlamydia	
25.12.07	Settlement Point Rd.	Motor Vehicle Accident	Dead on Arrival
27.12.07	Hamlyn Bev F	Chlamydia	
27.12.07	Bangalay Millie F	Chlamydia	Euthanased 10.01.08
30.12.07	Orchid Otto M	Chlamydia	
02.01.08	Kennedy Easy M	Lethargic	Released 09.01.08
02.01.08	Mermaid Simone F	Chlamydia	Dead on Arrival
03.01.08	Oxley Westi F	Walking on Highway - blind	Euthanased 13.01.08
04.01.08	Ocean M.V.A.	Motor Vehicle accident	Euthanased 04.01.08
05.01.08	Grassmere Nate - M	In dangerous area – checked	Released 05.01.08
10.01.08	Oxley Bill M	Lethargic – checked	Released 15.01.08
12.01.08	William Krystal Joey F	Abandoned – finishing growing up	
14.01.08	Oxley Michelle F	Walking on Highway – checked	Released 14.01.08
15.01.08	One Mile Beach Noah Joey	Abandoned – finishing growing up	
19.01.08	Hindman Foxie F	In dangerous area – checked	Released 20.01.08
21.01.08	Gumnut Marty M	Poor condition – found on ground	Euthanased 06.02.08
26.01.08	Coastlands Steve M	Low in tree – checked	Released 26.01.08
31.01.08	Yaluma Faye	Chlamydia	Euthanased 07.0-2.08
02.02.08	Macquarie Mystery F	Low in tree – checked	Released 02.02.08
02.02.08	Nowendoc Carl M	Conjunctivitis @ eye blind (l) eye	
13.02.08	Tacking Point Geoff M	Chlamydia	
16.02.08	Ocean Jane F	Injured @ eye	
16.02.08	Emerald Matilda F	Chlamydia	Euthanased 20.02.08
22.02.08	Lighthouse Di F	Chlamydia	
22.02.08	Banksia Ted	Limited Sight	
23.02.08	O'Briens Germaine F	Motor Vehicle Accident	Dead on Arrival
24.02.08	Calwalla Paul M	Chlamydia	Euthanased 25.02.08
25.02.08	Roto Abigail F	Checked	Released 25.02.08
26.02.08	Kolora Petal F	Chlamydia	
29.02.08	Taking Point Schoolie F	Leukemia	Euthanased 29.02.08

PORT MACQUARIE:

Month	Permanent	Treated	Released	Euthanased	Dead/Died	Admitted
December	2	20	3	2	2	10
January	2	23	7	5	1	13
February	2	21	2	5	1	12

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