

GUM TIPS

March 2021



Can you help us solve
THE MYSTERY OF WAUCHOPE JADE?

THE MYSTERY OF WAUCHOPE JADE



If you live in the Wauchope area, did you spot a koala in or near the town last year? If so, please telephone the Koala Hospital now on 02 6584 1522 to tell us more.

In September 2020, the Port Macquarie Koala Hospital was surprised to receive a call about a koala found right in the middle of the township of Wauchope, which is located 20 kilometres west of Port Macquarie.

This is a puzzle because historical records have shown that koalas have not been seen in the Wauchope township for the last 80 or more years! While there are small populations of koalas that occupy scattered habitat to the north, the west and to the south of the town some distance away, within Wauchope itself there are only a handful of koala food trees which are not enough to sustain even one koala.

We are hoping someone will come forward with information to help us understand Wauchope Jade's story.

A few years ago in 2018, one healthy young male koala was found running up a street in a new housing estate on the western side of Wauchope. He was captured and brought into the Hospital for a health assessment. This young male prompted a full two-day search of the area using a team of volunteers, a scat detection dog and handler, leading us to find a small amount of koala scats (poo) along the creek leading south of the town. With the help of Forestry Corporation New South Wales, we also set up 'song meters', small devices which are mounted on trees to detect koala calls but the only evidence of koalas calling was in the nearby Bago State Forest. This healthy young male was ear-tagged, microchipped and released into Bago State Forest where other koalas were calling.

And then up pops Wauchope Jade!

There are three possible locations some way out of town, from which Wauchope Jade could have come. The difficulty is that for her to get to the middle of town where she was found, she would have had to have travelled a long distance over backyard fences and along roads. For the 'Wauchopian' residents, living in a township where koalas are just never seen, a koala walking along a backyard fence would have certainly created a stir, but no one seems to have seen her!

On local radio, the Koala Hospital put the word out asking if anyone had information about other sightings of Wauchope Jade but so far we have received no response. We continue to scratch our heads - how on earth did a young, healthy female koala evade detection in a large urban township possibly for weeks? Could something dubious have occurred? Is it possible that Wauchope Jade was illegally



Gentle Jade.

captured in the bush somewhere and brought into town as a 'pet' and escaped?

We are grateful to the very kind resident who did spot this koala sitting on a dead tree stump one Sunday afternoon right in the middle of town; knowing koalas just don't occur in Wauchope, he captured her and put her in his

chook house (called Cluckingham Palace by the way!) for safety while he called the Hospital.

As we currently cannot determine her point of origin, and as she is young and healthy, it is likely that she will become part of our Wild Koala Breeding Program. It is at times like this, that we wish koalas could speak!

CONTENTS

The mystery of Wauchope Jade.....	2	Major koala habitat study completed	10
Report by Clinical Director, Cheyne Flanagan.....	4	What's in a name?.....	12
Report by President, Sue Ashton	5	Koala Food Tree Giveaway starts in April.....	13
The koala mating game.....	6	New Koala Hospital website launched.....	14
New nature tourism experience in Cowarra State Forest.....	8	Koala Kids.....	15

GUM TIPS is the official newsletter of Koala Conservation Australia Inc. and is published quarterly.

Editor: Becky Harrington

Contributors: Cheyne Flanagan, Sue Ashton, Matt Whatman, Rebecca Montague-Drake, Scott Castle, Peggy Eather, Becky Harrington.

Photography (unless individually credited): Carole Grant AFIP FAPS, Scott Castle, Becky Harrington

Disclaimer *Koala Conservation Australia Inc. and the Management Committee do not accept any liability for the results of any actions taken or not taken, on the basis of information given or discussed with groups or other organised events, meetings and/or for information provided by speakers or for any information published for or on behalf of the organisation, its organs and officers.*



REPORT BY CLINICAL DIRECTOR, CHEYNE FLANAGAN

What an amazing difference between weather conditions now and just over a year ago. We have had so much rain that all the eucalypts have excellent flushes of growth which will be available for koalas to forage on and be helpful for the next breeding season.

Admissions to the hospital remain comparable to 'normal' years with Autumn being a quiet time for admissions. Most of the admitted patients are from urban areas and from other regions within NSW; chlamydial infection is still the major cause.

The hospital has just purchased a PCR Genie 111 which is a machine that detects the presence of chlamydia using a specific assay (which is a test). PCR (which stands for Polymerase Chain Reaction) equipment has in the past been too expensive but now all of this equipment is reasonably priced and available. For many years we sent all of our chlamydial swabs to the University of Sydney's

Koala Health Hub to be screened. We funded the Hub for three years and are so grateful for their wonderful work. Now that we have this new machine on site, we will be able to determine positive or negative results within approximately one hour, which will be so useful for decision-making especially in relation to releasing koalas. The process is not difficult, but importantly it has to be done in the right sequence and without interruption.

The amount of work that is going on behind the scenes at the moment in designing the facility at Cowarra and at our current site, is massive. Concurrently the amount of work to prepare for the scientific licencing for the breeding program is huge. Add to that the considerable amount of planning work going into research projects. These vital husbandry projects are essential to best practice in rehabilitation of koalas across Australia. As you can imagine,

an enormous team of people is involved in doing an enormous amount of work right now!

We are pleased to announce that, all being well, we will present a two-day koala rehabilitation workshop this year on August 28th and 29th here in Port Macquarie, for WIRES NSW and other licenced wildlife groups who wish to attend. Last year's workshop had to be postponed because of COVID. Unfortunately we have decided to leave hosting the National Koala Conference until 2022. This event was cancelled last year due to the fires and pandemic, and we are reluctant to stage a three-day conference yet, with international borders still closed. Watch our website for announcements.

We would like to thank all our wonderful volunteers and paid staff for the amazing work that goes on here seven days a week.

We also wish our readers good health in these unusual times.



REPORT BY PRESIDENT, SUE ASHTON

We are just three months into 2021 and the pace of activity at the Port Macquarie Koala Hospital continues unabated.

The architects, Allen Jack + Cottier, who won the tender to do the design of the new Koala Hospital and the facility for the breeding program in Cowarra State Forest, have been working solidly since the middle of January. They have visited the two sites, met and interviewed many staff and volunteers at the hospital and have held several planning workshops with people from the Koala Hospital and with sub-consultants. These people are all critical to the success of these two multi-million dollar projects.

Several of the 14 sub-consultants engaged on the projects (engineers, landscapers, geophysicists and others) have also visited Port Macquarie and the two building sites.

Landscape architects, OCULUS, visited both sites to familiarise themselves with the landscape requirements with aims of, 'creating great places for the community to enjoy while balancing the needs of authorities and stakeholders'.

Also engaged early in the projects is Cundall, an organisation committed to ensuring the buildings at both sites use innovative ideas with a sustainable

outcome. Part of their research was to survey all Koala Hospital staff and volunteers and ask them to rank the items on the United Nations sustainability framework. Topics like zero carbon energy, land and nature, zero waste, travel and transport and seven other topics were ranked and the findings used to influence the design of the facilities.

First view of Allen Jack + Cottier's concept designs will be late this month, March 2021.

While preparation for the designs continues, a small team has been meeting with our breeding program partner, Taronga Conservation Society. A project plan for the breeding program has been developed with an ambitious timeline. The first step is applying for a scientific licence to breed wild koalas through the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.

Both the design and building of the new premises and the development of the wild koala breeding program are complex and will take time. Information on all of these projects will be published regularly on our new website. I encourage you to visit the website and stay up to date with all that's happening at the Port Macquarie Koala Hospital.

THE KOALA MATING GAME



Lismore Rose, normally an extrovert, keeps her secret safe.

At the Koala Hospital we operate under two licensing systems. One is under the authority of the NSW Department Primary Industries (DPI) which allows us to hold non-releasable koalas permanently. These koalas have been admitted for treatment but for a variety of reasons are not suitable for release; these are our permanent residents, cared for in enclosures at the Hospital where people can see them and learn about their stories. The other licence is held under the NSW National Parks and Wildlife service (NPWS) and is a rehabilitation licence allowing wild koalas to be admitted to care, treated and all being well, released back to their home range once well. Visitors do not see these rehabilitation koalas at any time.

Under the DPI licence we can have permanent koalas breed. Currently we have two resident koalas, Lismore Myrtle and Lismore Rose, who have 'pinkies' in the pouch – wee, tiny joeys! Koalas are comparatively solitary animals and Rose and Myrtle live in their own enclosures by themselves. So how did these tiny joeys arrive?

Let's look at the mating game...

A female koala has a cycle of around six weeks with a small window of a few days within that cycle where she is receptive and ready for mating. This cycle goes on for many months if a male has not achieved his goal. Many a homeowner has complained of grunting males and screaming females in the trees at night. The female koala is probably not receptive and ready at that time. The male will try his luck, ready or not, hence the noise which, in forested environments, can be heard for kilometres at night.

A young male called Evans Head CW, also a permanent DPI koala (with an eye missing and a few other issues) was deemed to not only have the right genetics, but is also very healthy and was chosen as the 'stud'.

Success: two 'pinkies' in the pouch!

At separate times, CW was placed in both Rose and Myrtle's enclosures for a short period once a week. CW did as expected, with lots of bellowing, growling, urinating and rubbing his chest on the gunyahs and announcing he was there. CW chased both Rose and Myrtle, whereupon they both protested loud and strong!

CW was removed (much to his disgust) after about five minutes of this showdown and returned to



Lismore Myrtle shows off her bump.

his enclosure as Rose and Myrtle's behaviour told us emphatically 'I am not receptive, get away from me'. CW bellowed and hooted for about five minutes in his enclosure to announce he was 'the male' and then promptly went to sleep.

This procedure was repeated for five minutes every week with the same result. BUT...towards the end of the fifth week, Hospital staff heard Lismore Myrtle bellowing (yes, females can bellow) and rushed out, to place CW in the enclosure with Myrtle. Voila! Lismore Myrtle was receptive and an immediate mating occurred. Male koalas do need to read the 'Koala Mating Behaviour Etiquette Guidelines' as immediately after a successful mating occurs, the males can bite and attack the female! Needless to say, staff intervened.

Lismore Rose did not indicate by bellowing when she was receptive, so staff put CW in her enclosure on the set day and again, voila! No protests this time, and a successful second mating occurred. Staff were on hand and removed CW immediately afterwards.

Staff decided to wait a few months to ensure the 'pinkies' were established in the pouch and then had a quick check. To our absolute



Evans Head CW relaxes after the action.

delight there WERE pinkies in the pouches of both Lismore Rose and Lismore Myrtle. Success! Well done to CW – and Myrtle and Rose!

As Myrtle is a few weeks ahead of Rose, her pouch has a definite swelling and movement of the joey is evident.

All being well, by late Autumn, both joeys should start to emerge from the pouches!

This project has provided incredibly useful information for the upcoming Wild Koala Breeding Program.

NEW NATURE TOURISM EXPERIENCE IN COWARRA STATE FOREST

An exciting eco-tourism development is underway for the Mid North Coast of New South Wales. Scheduled to open in 2022, it will be located between Port Macquarie and Wauchope and just a few minutes' drive from the Pacific Highway.

Based on the concept of an immersive natural forest experience, it will also showcase the culture of local Birpai people, the traditional custodians of the area. A canopy walkway through the trees will give visitors insight into life for the animals and birds



Traditional indigenous knowledge. Image courtesy of FCNSW.

of the forest. Once the Cowarra site is open, it will also temporarily become home to the residents of the Port Macquarie Koala Hospital, while the brand new Hospital is constructed in town. Visitors will enjoy watching these koalas and learning more about the species and the threats they face in the wild.

Koalas will be part of immersive forest experience.

Still further into the forest, tucked away from human activity, the quiet work of the important Wild Koala Breeding Program will be going on. The Koala Hospital has been able to fast-track this world-first conservation breeding facility owing to generous donations from all over the world following the 2019-2020 bushfires.

WildNets Australia will add further to the adventures with an innovative Net Park. High amongst the trees, people of almost any age will be able to explore a vast network of interconnected spaces including bouncy netted rooms, tree houses and suspension bridges. This attraction will '...allow

people to enjoy the beauty of the forest and a bird's eye view of the world amongst the tree tops'.

The project is driven by Forestry Corporation of New South Wales, who received a grant from the state government to develop a tourism precinct in the region. As with Sealy Lookout near Coffs Harbour, Forestry Corp will collaborate with a range of stakeholders during development of the Cowarra site, including north coast timber mills whose timber products will feature at the site.

The Cowarra masterplan outlines various elements that are envisaged to be developed over time, and open to the public:

- Traditional Aboriginal cultural experiences and storytelling, including cultural burning
- Canopy walkway through the forest
- Outdoor learning walks featuring traditional and modern forest management practices
- Exhibition koalas will be on display, including opportunities to learn about the wild koala breeding program, their habitat and the importance



A path in the forest. Image courtesy of Reio Avaste.

of living sustainably to minimise the effects of climate change on our environment.

- WildNets adventure park
- Picnic area and café
- Giant Hello Koala sculpture

Kathy Lyons, Senior Manager Stewardship Forestry Corporation of NSW described Cowarra as an ‘...opportunity for locals and visitors to learn about old and new land management practices.’ This will include ‘...cultural burning in a contemporary setting and how Forestry Corporation manages state forests for multiple benefits including recreation, conservation and the sustainable production of renewable timber which stores carbon for life.’

Amos Donovan, CEO Bunyah Aboriginal Land Council said, ‘This precinct will showcase the culture and heritage of the Birpai people, sharing

traditional knowledge of the land and how together we can best manage forests for the future.’ The site will also become important for employment and training for local Aboriginal people.

Architect, Professor Ken McBryde, developed the masterplan for Cowarra and spoke of the shared vision of all partners involved. ‘Visitors will see that life on earth is a delicate circuit of energy, of symbiotic relationships that need to be respected by all. In ways we can no longer ignore, Cowarra will have taught us to see the contribution trees make not only to threatened koalas but also to our survival.’

The Cowarra State Forest Tourism Precinct is a development of Forestry Corporation of NSW. Current partners include the NSW State Government, Port Macquarie Koala Hospital, Bunyah Local Aboriginal Land Council and WildNets Australia.



Image courtesy of Danielle Bamforth.

MAJOR LOCAL KOALA HABITAT STUDY COMPLETED



A mother koala and her joey in a recently burnt area. The presence of wet refuge areas in the surrounding landscape allows koalas to survive bushfires and later recolonise such burnt areas. Image courtesy of Mark Fischer.

Through Spring 2020, the Koala Recovery Partnership was extremely busy undertaking a major study of koala distribution and habitat selection at 264 sites in the Hastings-Macleay region.

The study sought to determine:

- Which types of vegetation communities are important koala habitat?
- Where are koalas currently found across the Hastings-Macleay Region?

These sites covered a wide range of habitats. Each site was visited by a botanist to record tree species present and habitat 'quality' factors, such as eucalypt dieback, impact from the 2019-20 bushfires, weeds and native eucalypt regeneration. This dataset provides important knowledge about what factors are important for koalas and gives Port Macquarie-Hastings and Kempsey Shire Councils a robust dataset that can be used to inform any future Comprehensive Koala Plans of Management. Each site was then visited by 'koala detection dogs'. These dogs have been specially trained to sniff out koala scats (droppings).

On half the sites, 'AudioMoth' devices were also installed for

seven nights. These devices record male koala 'bellows' during the breeding season. This work is part of a regional koala monitoring program, which has been approved by the NSW Government and hopefully will involve 'citizen scientists' in time. The program has been named 'Koala Karaoke'. The Southern Highlands Koala Conservation Network simultaneously undertook the program, and creatively named their sites; one location has been labelled 'Love is in the Air' where amorous bellowing was recorded!



Mark Fischer from 3D Ecology Mapping with an AudioMoth ready for deployment.

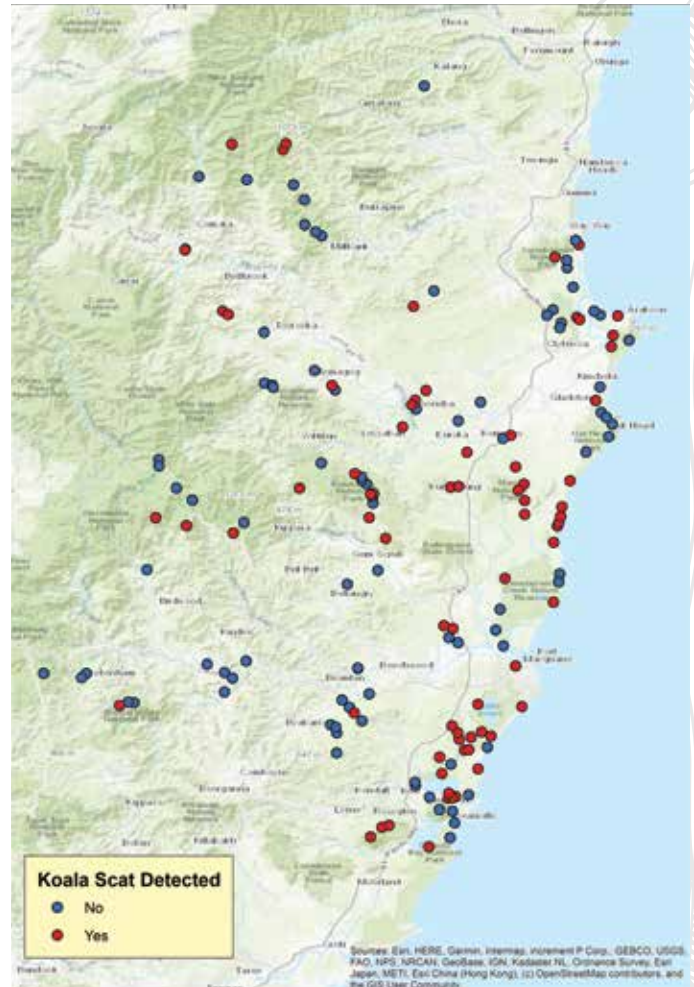
'Koala Karaoke' program records wild koalas!

The data is now being analysed, but some of the preliminary results include:

- Koalas are still widely distributed in this Area of Regional Koala Significance, with 55% of sites surveyed having current koala occupancy and this distribution widely spread over the Region. This finding is particularly notable given that many of the sites had been impacted by last season's fires.
- One area of particularly high koala occupancy was found to coincide with a priority hotspot identified through previous studies. The Koala Recovery Partnership is now working with Local Land Services to achieve on-ground protection of koala habitat in this important region. The Koala Recovery Partnership also provided information to help secure recent additions to the Maria River National Park for koala habitat protection in this key area.
- Koala detection dogs revealed koala populations in areas where they have not been known for at least the last two koala generations, such as Hat Head and Grassy Head. The Hat Head population is important as it shows contemporary links between the abundant populations around Crescent Head and the previously-believed isolated populations of South West Rocks. The finding of the Grassy Head population reminds us that koalas are surprisingly cryptic creatures which can be very tricky to spot!
- The studies have shown the importance of wet refuge habitat, such as creeklines, for the ability of koalas to be able to survive fires and later recolonise surrounding areas.

Further analysis continues on the large volume of important data collected in this study.

For more information, see the Koala Recovery Partnership's Facebook page, or their website: www.koalarecovery.org.au . Alternatively email Rebecca.montague-drake@mncjo.nsw.org.au.



Location of study sites and koala scats detected. All sites were on public land. All work was undertaken with appropriate Scientific Licences and approval of the relevant land manager.



From Canines for Wildlife, Max and koala scat.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?



Don't you think Lake Sequoia has beautiful ears?

Unusual or beautiful, funny or unlikely – every koala has a unique and meaningful name

How on earth, you may be wondering, did Port Macquarie Koala Hospital decide to name two of their patients 'Lord Bernie' and 'Lake Sequoia'? Rest assured, there is method and good reason for our naming protocols.

When koalas are rescued and admitted to the Hospital, they are each given a first and second

name. The first name refers to the local road in which they were found, or if they are admitted from outside the town (but still within our region), their first name is taken from the town closest to the point of rescue. Coupled with collection of other information and rescue details, this ensures we release koalas back to their home territories. Koalas that come into our care from further afield across New South Wales, are usually given the nearest well-known regional town as their first name.

The second name can refer to the member of the Hospital rescue team who responded to the call, but more often the koala is named after the concerned member of the public who telephoned our 24 hour rescue line, or the name of a friend or family member they suggest.

In this way, some unusual and beautiful names occur. Lord Bernie sounds very grand, doesn't he? He is a male koala, who was found one day roaming the Koala Hospital grounds by Bernie, one of our volunteers; the Hospital is located on Lord Street hence Bernie's esteemed first name! And the evocative Lake Sequoia was found on Lake Road and named

after the daughter of the kind lady who found her.

There are also times when this protocol can result in some funny and unlikely names such as Edward Montana, who despite sounding like a male movie star is actually a female koala! And you would be forgiven for thinking Ruby Lou is a cute young female, but in fact he is an older male koala found near Emerald Downs Golf Course!

Our naming protocol certainly gives every koala a unique and meaningful name.



Ruby Lou recovers at the Koala Hospital after his leg injury.



100% Australian Owned and Locally Printed

Speed up your business recovery by harnessing the power of print.

Call, email or request a quote online at snap.com.au

Snap Port Macquarie 1/106 Horton St P: (02) 6583 7544 E: portmacquarie@snap.com.au

Snap Port Macquarie are proud print sponsors of Gum Tips Quarterly Magazine

FREE KOALA FOOD TREE GIVEAWAY STARTS IN APRIL

One of the conservation projects the Port Macquarie Koala Hospital manages every year is the free Koala Food Tree Giveaway, because loss of habitat is the main reason for decline in koala populations.

Vital habitat is under ever-increasing threat from urban development, and the devastating bushfires of last summer destroyed large swathes of forest and bush. This revegetation project will help re-establish habitat and provide important links between areas of existing habitat for our local koalas.

25,000 koala food tree seedlings will be available to local residents and organisations.

This year we are again working with Forestry Corporation of New South Wales to offer free koala food trees to local individuals, schools, organisations and

businesses. To provide for koalas into the future, we are asking local people to plant these seedlings wherever they have space for trees to flourish. If you are a private landholder or farmer, we encourage you to get involved and plant as many seedlings as your available land can sustain. If you have room in your front yard for one or more trees, we want to hear from you (note we discourage planting of food trees in back yards as koalas may become trapped and threatened by dogs).

This year we will give away 25,000 tree seedlings of four different species, to suit different soil and habitat locations. The species are Tallowwood, Grey Gum, Forest Red Gum and Swamp Mahogany, all favourites with our local koalas. Each year more and more local people and organisations come to the Hospital to collect trees, showing they want to be involved in regenerating and preserving habitat.

Trees will be available from early April at the Lord Street entrance of the Koala Hospital. Please visit



A forest in the making! Tree seedlings await collection at the Koala Hospital.



Another consignment of healthy, young trees is delivered.

www.koalahospital.org.au to order your trees ahead of collection. The Tree Giveaway will continue until all the stocks of seedlings have been collected.

We offer a planting guide with information on how to plant the trees and care for them to help them flourish.

We have a brand new website
www.koalahospital.org.au

Explore the koala-packed videos and loads of new resources and information!

The Port Macquarie Koala Hospital website has recently been re-designed and now has a striking, contemporary look and feel. Easy to navigate and explore, the site enables you to engage with the work of the Koala Hospital and Koala Conservation Australia. On our website you can learn more about koalas and why they are in danger, and discover what you can do to help save wild koalas.



You can

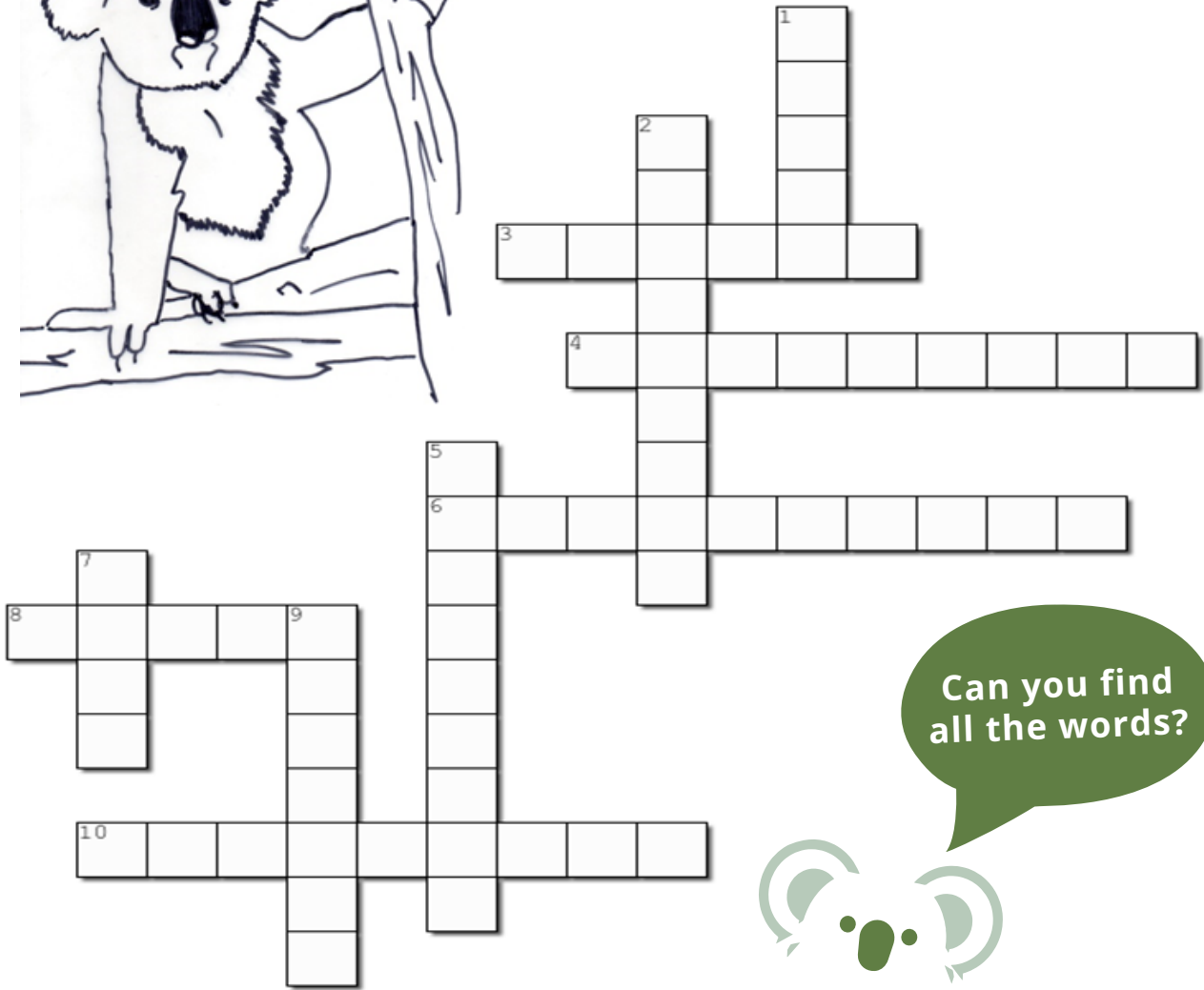
- Watch a virtual tour of the Koala Hospital
- Book to visit (currently necessary during COVID times)
- Adopt a wild koala
- Telephone for help if you see a koala in distress
- Report and log local koala sightings on an online map
- Make a donation, fund a koala food tree
- Apply to become a member or volunteer
- Apply for the International Volunteer or local Work Experience Programs

Koala Kids



W₄ O₁ R₁ D₂

P₃ U₁ Z₁₀ Z₁₀ L₁ E₁



Can you find all the words?



A₁ C₃ R₁ O₁ S₁ S₁

D₂ O₁ W₄ N₁

- 3. A COLLECTION OF TREES.
- 4. THE COUNTRY WHERE KOALAS LIVE.
- 6. GUM LEAVES ARE ALSO CALLED _____ LEAVES.
- 8. VERY YOUNG KOALAS SLEEP HERE.
- 10. AN ANIMAL ACTIVE AT NIGHT.
- 1. KOALAS ARE WRONGLY CALLED THESE.
- 2. AN ANIMAL WITH A POUCH.
- 5. AN ANIMAL THAT ONLY EATS PLANTS.
- 7. A BABY KOALA IS KNOWN AS A _____.
- 9. A PLACE WHERE AN ANIMAL LIVES.

ANSWERS: MARSUPIAL, POUCH, BEARS, HERBIVORE, AUSTRALIA, NOCTURNAL, HABITAT, FOREST, JOEY, EUCALYPTUS

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    

General Enquiries: 02 6584 1522

www.koalahospital.org.au



**Up In The Trees
Under The Stars**
is a new children's
story book written
and illustrated by
Jackie Salisbury,
one of the
volunteers at the
**Port Macquarie
Koala Hospital.**



This delightful book explores the question, 'What do koalas do at night?' and the story and heart-warming illustrations feature many of the koalas who live permanently at the Hospital.

Join Myrtle the koala and all her friends for a night-time adventure, as they set out to solve a stormy night mystery.

Suitable for all ages.

Up In The Trees Under The Stars is for sale online (\$15 per copy plus shipping) at <https://shop.koalahospital.org.au/collections/books-and-dvds>.

If you live near the Port Macquarie Koala Hospital, you can pick up a copy over the counter at our souvenir shop, open 8.30 am – 4 pm, 7 days a week.