

Koala - *Phascolarctos cinereus*

Conservation status:

(Queensland Nature Conservation Act and/or Commonwealth Environment and Biodiversity Conservation Act)

NEAR THREATENED

VULNERABLE

ENDANGERED
(Queensland and
Commonwealth)

**CRITICALLY
ENDANGERED**

Description

The koala has a short compact body and large head, large ears and no functional tail. It has dense fur, which is white below and brown to grey above with white patches, a prominent black nose and large claws (Krockenberger et al. 2012). Length: head and body 680–820mm; weight: 4100–9100g.

Habitat

The koala inhabits a range of temperate, sub-tropical and tropical forest, woodland and semi-arid communities dominated by *Eucalyptus* species. The species of tree and the extent of tree cover are the most important characteristics for the koala. The diet of the koala is restricted mainly to species of *Eucalyptus* (about 50 different species of *Eucalyptus*) and some related genera including *Corymbia*, *Angophora* and *Lophostemon*. However, the koala also feeds on a number of other species, including species from the *Melaleuca* and *Leptospermum* genera. Preferences for eucalyptus species vary regionally and locally. Commonly preferred food trees in Queensland include members of the red gum group (e.g. *Eucalyptus tereticornis* blue gum, *E. camaldulensis* river red gum), grey gums (e.g. *E. propinqua*, *E. biturbinata*), *E. microcorys* tallowwood, *E. resinifera* red mahogany, *E. populnea* poplar box, and *E. thozetiana* mountain yapunyah. While woodland and forests dominated by *Eucalyptus* species are koalas preferred habitat, cypress forests may present suitable habitat and shelter due to their proximity to poplar box and ironbark woodland.



Koala scats (actual size)

While koalas may be difficult to spot in the canopy of trees, occupation or frequent use can be indicated by numerous faecal pellets or scats and distinct deep scratches on the trunk often characterised by scratches from their double thumb arrangement. Recent use is evident by fresh, wet, sticky appearing scat with a strong scent, fresh scratches on the trunk, or a musk scent from males rubbing their scent gland found on their chest against the trunk. During the spring-summer breeding period, the male's deep, harsh, bellowing mating calls or grunting can be heard over long distances. Screaming, wailing, and squealing are also often heard from both females and males when disturbed.



Distinct fresh scratches (left) and numerous deep scratches indicating frequent use (right)

Distribution

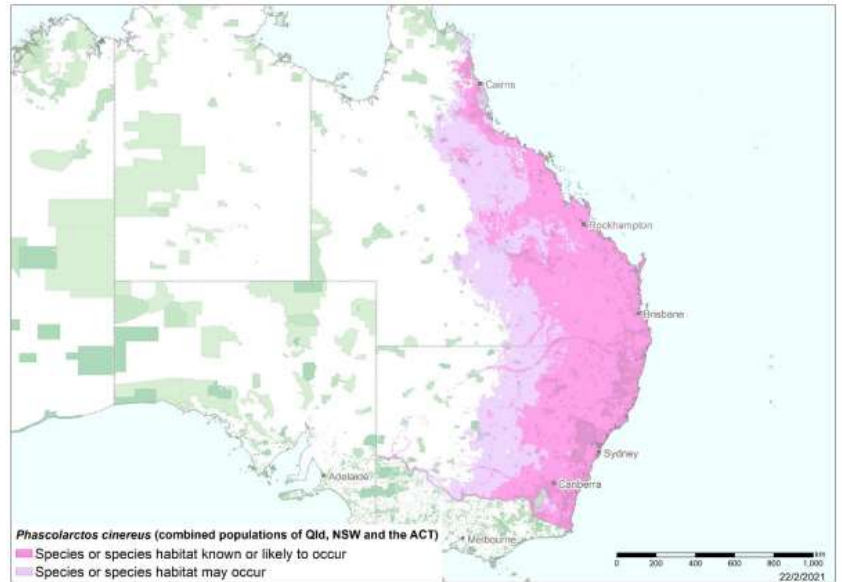
Fragmented sub-populations of the Koala occur throughout Queensland and the distribution extends inland from the East Coast: from the Wet Tropics bioregion (Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia) region into the Einasleigh Uplands bioregion in the north of the state; from the Central Mackay Coast bioregion, through the Brigalow Belt North bioregion to the

Desert Uplands and Mitchell Grass Downs bioregions, and from the Southeast Queensland bioregion, through the Brigalow Belt to the Mulga Lands and Channel Country bioregions in the southwest of the state.

Map 1 details koala distribution in Australia.

Conservation/Recovery Plans

Nature Conservation (Koala) Conservation Plan 2017 and *South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy 2020–2025* (Queensland Department of Environment and Science, 2020)



Map 1. Koala distribution (DAWE, 2021)

Potential impacts and protective measures for timber harvesting operations

Potential Impact	Cop ¹ measures
Loss, fragmentation and/or degradation of habitat and habitat trees	<p><i>Schedule 3 Watercourse protection</i> provides protection zones that restrict or exclude harvesting and clearing activities along watercourse corridors, aiding connectivity across the harvest area.</p> <p><i>Schedule 6 Habitat trees</i> outlines provisions to retain and protect habitat and recruitment habitat trees across the harvested area, providing connectivity, feed, and shelter trees and ensures protection of fauna on-site during harvest.</p> <p><i>Schedule 8 Forest road and track management</i> seeks to minimise the total necessary road length, complexity of road network, interference with natural drainage systems, and alteration of natural features.</p>

1. Code of practice for native forest timber production on Queensland’s State forest estate 2020

PROTECTIVE MEASURES FOR OPERATIONS CONDUCTED UNDER THE FORESTRY ACT 1959

ACTION 1: Any tree which shows the following indicators for high usage by koalas must be retained and protected as a habitat tree or retained tree.

- multiple scratches and 20 or more faecal pellets below the tree; or
- significantly greater usage indicators (multiple scratches, faecal pellets, and rubs from scent marking) relative to other trees in the broader area (e.g. State forest or region)
- damage minimisation and residue management measures for habitat trees from Schedule 6 of the CoP are to be applied

ACTION 2: Consistent with the *Nature Conservation (Koala) Conservation Plan 2017* (the Plan), harvesting is to address koala spotting and sequential clearing requirements:

- harvesting of trees is conducted in a way that ensures that appropriate habitat links are maintained within the harvesting site, and between the site and adjacent areas, to allow koalas that are present to move out of the site of their own accord.
- the operator responsible for harvesting trees has the requisite training and/or experience with respect to a ‘koala spotter’ as prescribed by the Plan;



- all trees are inspected for koalas by a 'koala spotter' prior to harvesting.

ACTION 3: Where a koala is observed in a tree:

- an exclusion area of 100m in all directions must be applied to the tree;
- all operations must cease within the exclusion area; and
- operations within the excluded area may only recommence after 6am of the day following the koala sighting and only if the koala is no longer located in the excluded area.

ACTION 4: If an injured koala is found you must:

- apply an exclusion area of 100m in all directions from the injured koala;
- cease all operations within the exclusion area;
- not interfere with or transport the injured animal; and
- advise 1300 ANIMAL (1300 264 625) and the Forest Products' sale supervisor as soon as possible

ACTION 5: For all koala sightings, you must notify the Forest Products' sale supervisor as soon as possible including:

- whether the koala is alive or dead;
- location (GPS co-ordinate); and
- date and time of the sighting.

Forest Products will notify DES for inclusion in the relevant database.

References

Australia Department of the Environment 2014. [EPBC Act referral guidelines for the vulnerable koala \(combined populations of Queensland, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory\)](#).

Krockenberger, A, Gordon, G, Dennis, AJ 2012. Koala (south-east bioregion) in L. Kurtis et al. (eds.), *Queensland's threatened animals*, CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood, Victoria.

Further information

For further information or advice about the species or issue(s) relating to the species, send an email to the Threatened Species Unit, DES—threatened.species@des.qld.gov.au

Author & date of completion

Original author: G Gordon, Environmental Protection Agency, 1996.

Revised: Internal update and review, DERM-QPWS, 2011.

Revised: Internal update and review, DAF, 2018.

Reviewed: Internal update and review, DAF Forestry Ecology Team, 2022.

