

# Koalas and cars



## The problem

While koalas spend much of their time feeding or resting in trees, they also need to come to ground to move between the trees within their home range. This on-ground movement mostly occurs at night but koalas can be active at any time. Between July and September, koalas will spend more



time moving across the ground as adult males seek mates and juveniles disperse into new home ranges.

For a koala living in or near areas that have been developed, much of their habitat can be criss-crossed by roads. On-ground movement across roads places koalas at great risk of being hit by cars, particularly at night. This risk increases where traffic volume and speed are greater and where road position and road design create 'black spots' where koalas are hard to see.

Vehicle related koala mortality has the most significant impact on koalas after habitat clearing and fragmentation, affecting about 300 koalas per year in south-east Queensland's Koala Coast alone. The koalas that are killed are predominantly breeding-age animals.

## The solutions

### What you can do

Koalas have little awareness of how dangerous a busy road can be. When an animal appears from nowhere in front of your car there is often little that can be done to avoid it. By following

a few simple practices you can help to make roads safer for koalas — which may make the difference between accidentally hurting a koala and knowing that you've helped one survive.

Some of the things that drivers can do are:

- Make sure you are aware of those areas where koalas are known to cross roads (look for 'koalas cross here' signs).
- Stay within the recommended speed limits on koala speed zone signs. This will make roads safe for everyone, including wildlife.
- Be alert for koalas and other wildlife crossing the road. Scan the sides of the road for koalas and watch for koala 'eyeshine' (reflections from an animal's eyes) at night.
- Report injured or dead koalas that you see on the roadside so that they can be collected by wildlife rescue groups. Even dead koalas can provide researchers

with valuable information. Contact the Environmental Protection Agency hotline (1300 130 372) or a wildlife care group so that the koala can be rescued and receive treatment quickly. In some situations, it may be quicker to take the animal to the nearest vet.

Only consider moving an injured or dead koala from the road if you can do it safely. An injured koala will bite and scratch and must be covered with a thick blanket or towel before being handled. A koala can be confined in a closed cardboard box with a hessian bag or towel on the bottom for the animal to grip on to. If the koala is dead, its pouch should be checked for young, which can be cared for and ultimately released back into the wild.

Any handling should be carried out quickly to avoid making the koala struggle and causing it unnecessary stress.

### **Take extra care driving when koalas are breeding.**

Between July and September, male koalas will be moving around in search of mates and trying to establish their dominance over an area. At this time the weaned young, born the previous year, will also be leaving their mothers and moving into adjoining territories. This is the time of year when koalas are at their most vulnerable to being hit by cars.

### **Further information**

Further information on vehicle related mortality on koalas can be found by visiting [www.epa.qld.gov.au/koalaconservation/](http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/koalaconservation/) or by contacting the EPA Customer Services Centre on (07) 3227 8185.

