



Friends of the Koala Raises Alarm as Koala Car Hits Surge in the Northern Rivers

Northern Rivers, 30-06-2023 - Friends of the Koala, the leading koala conservation organisation in the Northern Rivers, is deeply concerned about the alarming rise in the number of koala car hits in the region. The organisation is urging the public to exercise heightened caution while driving to avoid further harm to all wildlife. If you see a koala that looks injured, dead or is close to a road, call their 24/7 rescue team (02 6622 1233) immediately.

Over the past month, Friends of the Koala has witnessed a distressing surge in koala car hits across the Northern Rivers, with six koalas dying just this week due to vehicle strikes. These incidents not only pose a significant threat to the survival of koalas but also highlight the urgent need for increased awareness and responsible action from drivers, especially while there are more visitors in the area who may not be used to wildlife on roads.

Koalas are renowned for their docile nature and slow movement, making them particularly susceptible to vehicle collisions. The rise in car hits is due to a combination of factors, including increased traffic, urban development encroaching on koala habitats, and drivers failing to exercise caution in areas known to be frequented by koalas.

Friends of the Koala is calling upon all residents, visitors, and motorists in the Northern Rivers region to be mindful of the presence of koalas on or near roads. It is crucial to remain vigilant and take appropriate measures to minimize the risk of accidents. If an accident does happen, stop and call the Friends of the Koala 24/7 rescue team. Stay with the animal if you can, until a qualified and licensed rescuer can attend. If you are unable to stay, please be as specific as possible about the location. GPS coordinates or clear landmarks will help rescuers to find and transport the animal as soon as possible.

“It is devastating to see the impact of vehicle strikes on koalas. But if they get transported to our Koala Hospital quickly, there is still hope. There have been numerous occasions where koalas appeared dead on the road, but they were alive and could still be rehabilitated and released back into the wild. In other situations, the mum may not make it, but we can still save the joey in their pouch.” Dr Jackie Reed, Superintendent Veterinarian, Friends of the Koala Hospital

Friends of the Koala has rescue volunteers available 24/7 across the Northern Rivers region. If a sighting gets reported and the koala is healthy and safe, Friends of the Koala volunteers will try to install temporary signage to alert drivers of the recent sighting at that location. If the koala is injured, it will be safely transported to the purpose-built Koala Hospital in East Lismore – the largest Koala Hospital on the East Coast of Australia. There they will receive treatment from the dedicated Friends of the Koala veterinary team, who treat hundreds of koalas each year. Unique to the region, the Koala Hospital of Friends of the Koala has rehabilitation facilities on site, where more than 230 volunteers help to rehabilitate koalas until they can be released back to their homes in the wild.

Do not touch or try to transport koalas yourself as this could pose a significant risk to their health and safety, and yours.

“Koalas may look cuddly, but they can act aggressively, especially when they are stressed or in pain. They can cause serious injury if not rescued and transported safely by a trained rescuer with the appropriate PPE and equipment. They are very vulnerable too, so handling them the wrong way can do them more harm than good”.
Paul White, Volunteer Rescue Coordinator Friends of the Koala

The organisation offers the following recommendations:

1. Reduce speed: wildlife is often difficult to spot from a distance, especially at night, and can cross the road unexpectedly. Lowering your speed will give you more time to react and avoid collisions.
2. Be cautious: Pay extra attention when driving through areas identified as wildlife habitat, or where signage indicates recent sightings.
3. Report every koala you see close to a road immediately, whether they appear healthy, injured or dead.
4. If you can, stay with the animal until a rescuer attends. If you cannot stay, try to be as exact as possible about the location: specific addresses, GPS points or landmarks are incredibly helpful.
6. Save the phone numbers of Northern Rivers wildlife rescue organisations in your phone, so you are ready to report any sightings
Koalas - Friends of the Koala 02 6622 1233
Other wildlife - Northern Rivers Wildlife Carers 6628 1866, WIRES 1300 094 737, Tweed Valley Wildlife Carers 02 6672 4789

BACKGROUND

Friends of the Koala is committed to protecting and conserving koalas and their habitats in the Northern Rivers region. Through their tireless efforts and with over 230 volunteers, they provide rescue, veterinary treatment, rehabilitation, community education, habitat restoration and advocacy for koalas. However, preventing accidents in the first place is crucial to ensure the long-term survival of these beloved creatures.

By spreading awareness about the increased risks of koala car hits, Friends of the Koala aims to foster a community that prioritizes the safety and well-being of all wildlife. The organization encourages everyone to join their cause and make a difference by taking responsible actions on the road.

For more information or to make a donation, please visit www.friendsofthekoala.org or contact: manager@friendsofthekoala.org.

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