



Koala News



Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland Bayside Branch

Volume 14 Issue 3

August 2012

Baby Bunker's Ordeal

By Samantha (Sam) Longman

I received little Bunker on Tuesday the 17th July from Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital. Bunker's story is not a pleasant. He was found on the ground on the 11th July 2012 by a member of the public. The person phoned Wildcare and let them know that this joey had fallen at least 10m from its mum. They had kept him for a little while and couldn't find any injuries, so they had placed Bunker in a bucket outside with a hot water bottle.

The Wildcare person asked if they could come and get the baby koala as it was likely to have some sort of injury after falling that distance, but the person was not happy with that response and hung up.

The person was finally contacted late the next afternoon by a DERM Ranger who was told that they kept the joey all night and then helped it back up the tree to its mother that morning where it had stayed all day. They were confident that it was okay, and they still wouldn't provide their details.

Later that night this person rang Wildcare saying that the baby was on the ground again and asked if they could come and get it as it was not well. They had brought Bunker back inside and were nursing him. By the time a Wildcare/Koala carer got there to pick Bunker up he was displaying neurological signs, he was also extremely exhausted. Bunker then started having seizures after only a few hours of being in care. He had to be rushed straight up to Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital for emergency treatment and care.

The moral of this story is if the person that found Bunker on the ground handed this baby koala over in the first place, he could have been checked out by a vet and possibly taken back to his mum (if he was ok). Also if he was handed over straight away he would not have had a second fall. Bunker has a very nasty head trauma and was having seizures for 4 days straight, these have now stopped and each day he improves just a little, although he is still very wobbly on his feet. He is a very sweet little boy that has been through a lot in his short little life.



Know Your Scat

Koalas can be really difficult to spot in trees, even if you are specifically looking for them. A few times now I have heard of landholders saying “I have never seen a Koala on this property”, pretty much while one is snoozing right above their heads.

One of the best ways to tell if there is a Koala on your property is to look beneath trees for their scats. Koalas will generally spend time in Eucalypt trees while they are feeding, but may also rest in any good-sized tree, so look in the area between the trunk of any likely tree and the drip line (or edge) of the canopy.



KOALA SCATS

Source: Triggs (2004)

What you are looking for is a long, oval or cylindrical scat that contains coarse fragments of leaves. They may be brown, red brown, blue-green, grey green or yellow-brown. Koala scats also smell of eucalyptus oil when they are fresh, but have no smell when they are dry. In the bayside area, other species' scats which may be confused for Koala scats are those of the Common Brushtail Possum and Common Ringtail Possum.

Although as you can see from the photographs of the scats of these species, they are quite different in shape from Koala Scats, and the Common Ringtail Possum scats are much smaller. Possum scats are also likely to include material other than eucalyptus leaves, such as insects and hair.



COMMON BRUSHTAIL POSSUM SCATS

Source: Triggs (2004)



COMMON RINGTAIL POSSUM SCATS

Source: Triggs (2004)

Reference: Triggs, B. (2004). Tracks, Scats and Other Traces – A field guide to Australian Mammals. Revised Edition. Oxford University Press. Melbourne.

If you would like to contribute to future editions of the Koala News, please contact Paulette Jones paulette@biodiversity.tv

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