

Keep a watch out for Tweed's koalas this summer

Koala habitats are extremely dry and at high risk of bushfire

Most of the Tweed is still categorised as suffering from intense drought and so koala habitats remain extremely dry and are at high risk of bushfire.

Forested wetlands on the Tweed Coast floodplain provide excellent koala habitat as they support two of the primary koala food trees – the Swamp Mahogany and the Forest Red Gum.

However, forested wetlands that are normally very wet are now dry, including the Pottsville Wetland. This means areas of peat soil, which are soils comprising of partially decayed and densely packed organic material, are also dry.

Council's Bushland Officer Tanya Fountain said if a fire starts in peat soils, it burns with high intensity and is very difficult to extinguish.

"As well as the loss of koalas due to high intensity fire, it can also result in the loss of koala habitat due to collapse of trees, as the fire burns deep into the soil and destroys it," Ms Fountain said.

Over the summer holiday period, Council Rangers will continue to monitor key spots known for illegal camping that are at higher risk of fire.

"Bush fires are more likely to spread and cause damage on days when the weather is very hot, dry and windy. These are usually on very high to extreme fire days and the NSW RFS may declare a total fire ban, meaning no fire may be lit in the open and all fire permits are suspended," she said.

Devastating bushfires over the last few months have resulted in significant declines to many koala populations throughout NSW.

"Because of this, it is even more important to protect the Tweed's koala populations," she said.

Keep a watch out for koalas this summer, particularly in our known koala habitat reserves at Cudgen Nature Reserve, Koala Beach bushland estate, Pottsville Environment Park and Pottsville Wetland.

Here's some things you can do to help protect the Tweed's koalas:

1. Report a fire immediately by calling triple zero (000). The quicker the Rural Fire Service can respond, the better chance they have at being able to contain the fire.
2. Report any suspicious behaviour or suspected arson to Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000. Bush fire arson is dangerous. It can destroy lives, properties and have long-term effects on the environment, including koalas.
3. Report any sick, injured or orphaned koalas to Friends of Koala 24-hour hotline on (02) 6622 1233 or find out more information or report koala sightings at www.tweed.nsw.gov.au/koalas

One of the organisations in Council's annual Mayoral Christmas Appeal (running until the end of January 2020) is Tweed Valley Wildlife Carers, who rescue and rehabilitate local wildlife.

Online donations can be made to Tweed Valley Wildlife Carers at <http://twvc.org.au>.

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