

## **Sandy Point Koala Action Project – Project update 12<sup>th</sup> November 2017**

### **Local history and planning session held**

A planning meeting was held in Sandy Point on Sat 11<sup>th</sup> November, after a good morning's working bee weeding banksia plantings in the coastal reserve with the Friends of the Foreshore.

First up, we ran a session collecting local history and information about koalas in Sandy Point, trying to piece together the origins of our current koala population. There was certainly a koala population through the bush around Waratah Bay originally long before Europeans arrived. The population was affected by land clearing since settlement in the late 1800's, and by periodic drought over the years. There may have been koalas moved in in the 1940's at a time when there was a large translocation program of koalas around Victoria. But at the moment we don't know whether our koalas originate from the local area, were moved in from elsewhere – or a blend of both! We plan to scour the historical records further, and can look at conducting some simple genetic testing to find out for sure if we can't solve the puzzle through the history books. If anyone has any information about this or historical records, please get in touch with us.

Next, the group did some initial action planning, and collected people's ideas about work to get started on. There's a bit of work to be completed over the next six months - Cassie Wright and Robbie Gray from NatureMatters (a local environmental consultancy) are doing some habitat assessment early in 2018, and doing some research to put together a report capturing all that we know about our koalas and to help the community plan for managing them. That will help develop plans for planting projects in the reserve and other wildlife corridors. In the meantime, the group is working to build community awareness about what people can do to protect koalas.

Because the koala habitat is fragmented, they have to travel distances through town, across roads and across farmland, where they are vulnerable to attack by dogs and stock, open to coming into contact with munge, and at risk of being hit by cars. The koala group will be raising awareness about this with holiday populations over the coming summer months, and sharing information with people about what they can do to help protect and support our koalas.

It's also really important to plant trees that are Indigenous to the local area. Narkabundah nursery in Sandy Point grows coastal manna gums (*Eucalyptus viminalis* ssp. *Pryoriana*) from local seed collected from the original trees (they will have stock from Easter). If you're getting plants from local nurseries, ask where the seed has come from – and the more local, the better. The best time to plant is between Easter and September – planting in summer will need a lot of water to kick off and will be less likely to survive.

We need people to report injured or sick wildlife as soon as possible – call Wildlife Victoria on 1300 094 535 or Sue Moore (wildlife carer in Walkerville) on 0429 016 695 if you see a koala on the ground or with signs of munge in Sandy Point.

## **Koala Action Project – next steps**

Next steps are:

- Activities over summer to raise community awareness about what the community can do to help – we'll be producing a brochure about Sandy Point koalas to share
- Writing up the local koala history information and hunting down more records
- Collecting local seed and propagating local plants for planting next year
- Habitat mapping and assessment of the eucalypts in Sandy Point
- A community meeting around Easter next year to share the results of the research and do action planning

## **Contact us**

If you want to be involved in or kept informed about the project, contact us at [sandypointkoalas@gmail.com](mailto:sandypointkoalas@gmail.com) or call Caitlin on 0428 302 938 or Di on 0437 392 277