

Chuwar Conservation Corridor

Briefing Paper

November 2024



Introduction

This briefing paper outlines the state of the Koalas in the Ipswich region; in particular the importance of the Chuwar Conservation Corridor in sustaining the Koala population in the region. With an alarming decline of Koala populations in South East Queensland particularly in rapidly growing urban centers such as Ipswich; this paper highlights the efforts of Goodness Enterprises Ltd in protecting and restoring a crucial ecological corridor for the Koala and other native fauna.

The State of Koalas

Koalas are listed as an endangered species under Queensland's Nature Conservation Act (1992) and the Australian Government's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999) (EPBC Act). The endangered status means that the species is at a high risk of extinction in the near future. The South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy 2020–2025 highlights that Koala populations in South east Queensland have dropped by 80% in the last 15 years¹. This alarming decline is primarily due to the clearing and degradation of Koala habitat. As remnant habitat becomes increasingly fragmented, Koalas are susceptible to disease, car strikes and dog attacks. This is particularly prevalent in and around the urban centers of South East Queensland.

The Koalas in Ipswich are important due to their unique genetic health distinct to the Koalas along the coast. Koalas were once abundant in Ipswich serving as source populations for surrounding areas². Although Koalas in the Ipswich region have adapted to the fragmentation of habitat; retaining habitat connectivity to ensure the movement of the species is critical in ensuring the future of the species in the region.

The Koala population in the Ipswich region was estimated at 4368 in 2016.³ Subsequent surveys including those conducted using Koala Detection Dogs in 2018 have only recorded presence of Koala in specific locations across Ipswich including at Pine Mountain, Redbank and Kholo Gardens. With significant loss of habitat across South East Queensland, population modelling conducted by the University of Queensland estimates up to 80% decline in Koala populations across South East Queensland⁴. With this rate of decline, current Koala numbers in and around Ipswich could be between 900 to 1200 individuals based on 2016 estimates. On the other hand, the Australian Koala Foundation estimates between 200-500 Koalas left due to only 31.5% of suitable habitat left in the region⁵. The loss of habitat caused by new housing developments; car strikes; and dog attacks; the Ipswich Koala are facing possible extinction in the wild by 2050.

¹ [South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy 2020–2025](#)

² [Ipswich City Council Koala Conservation and Habitat Management Plan](#)

³ Bussey, J and Ellis, W 2016 The Koalas Of Ipswich: Opportunities, Threats And Future Viability The University of Queensland, report commissioned by Lock the Gate Alliance, February 2016

⁴ Rhodes, Jonathan R., et al. "South East Queensland koala population modelling study." (2015).

⁵ <https://www.savethekoala.com/our-work/blair/>

The Chuwar Conservation Corridor

The Chuwar Conservation Corridor is an important wildlife corridor that ensures the movement and genetic flow of Koalas in the Ipswich region. The Chuwar Conservation Corridor connects significant koala habitat including the Kholo Gardens and Kholo Road Reserve to the west and the Pine Mountain Bush Reserve to the north where significant koala presence has been recorded.

The areas marked in green on the Queensland Government Map database (see below), highlight priority Koala habitat in Chuwar. This includes the area managed by Goodness Enterprises at 50 Coal Road and at 22-26 Coal Road.



Queensland Government Koala Habitat Map for the Chuwar Area

Protecting the Chuwar Conservation Corridor

Protection of habitat is deemed the most effective and long-term solution to conserve the Koala in South East Queensland⁶. The loss and fragmentation of habitat forces Koalas to venture outside their habitat where they are susceptible to vehicle strikes, dog attacks and disease. Therefore, habitat protection and restoration should be prioritized as the strategy to ensure the future of Koalas in South East Queensland. With this understanding, in 2022 Goodness Enterprises Ltd commenced the protection and restoration of the first stage of the Chuwar Conservation Corridor, beginning work to restore 12 acres of degraded, lantana and noxious weed infested bushland officially gazetted as Koala Habitat by the Queensland Department of Environment.

⁶ Tkaczynski, Aaron, and Sharyn Rundle-Thiele. "Koala conservation in South East Queensland: A grey literature review analysis." *Conservation Science and Practice* 5.3 (2023): e12874.

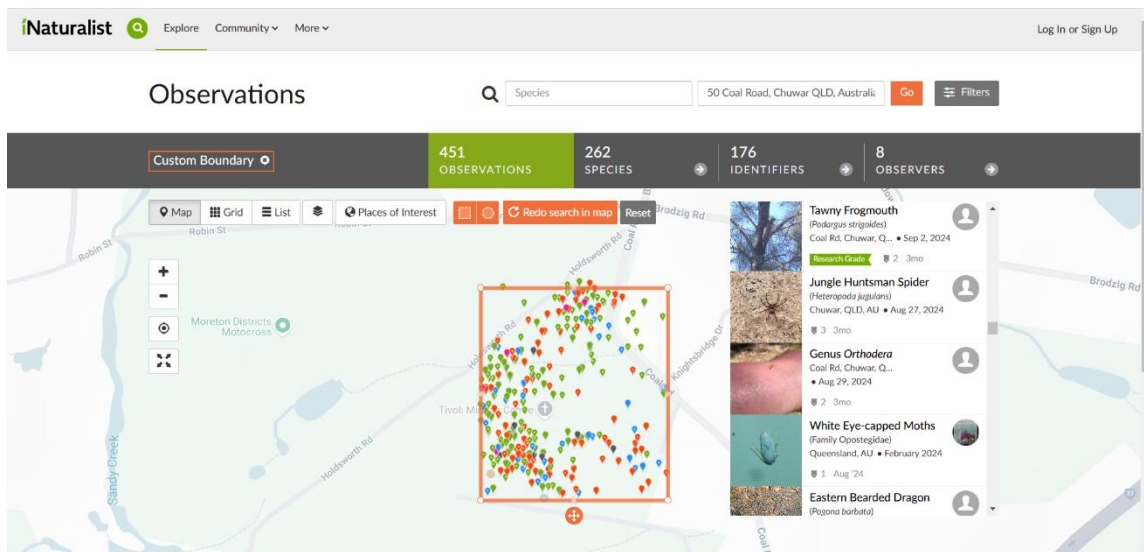
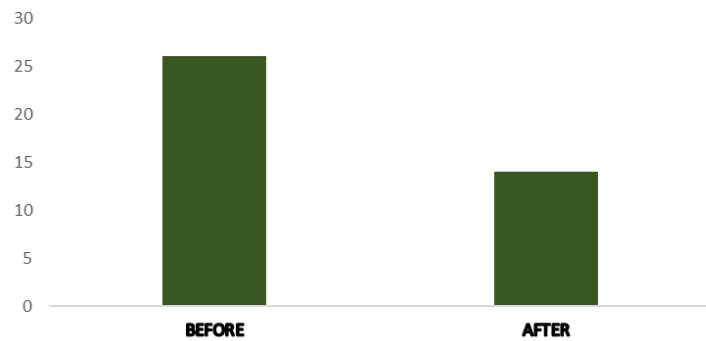
Over the past two years, under the direction of Conservation Project Manager, Dr Sameer Punde PhD, teams of Skilling Queenslanders for Work Trainees in Conservation have cleared noxious weeds, planted hundreds of koala fodder plants and other native flora and grasses, installed erosion control measures and built natural waterways and a billabong to help attract and rehabilitate native fauna.

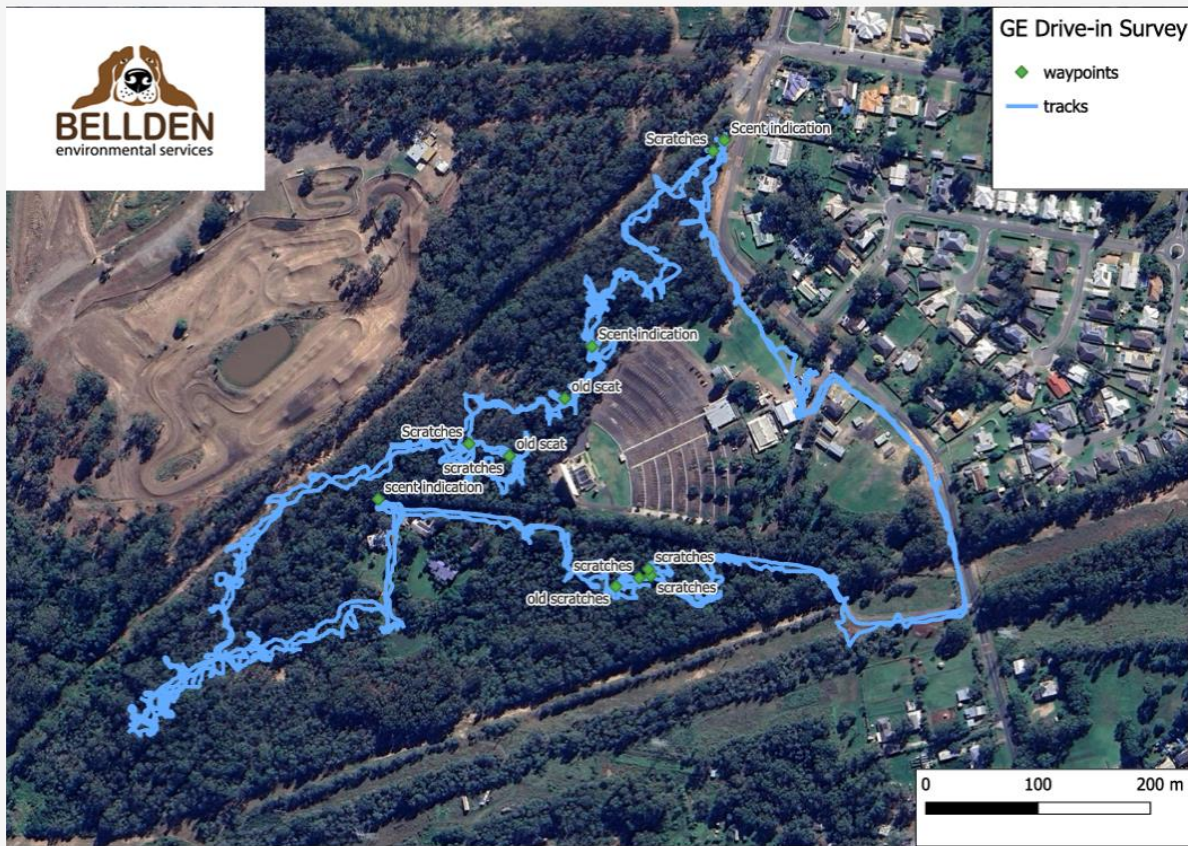
Whilst their work is ongoing and new fodder plantings are still juvenile, their efforts have already been rewarded *with a resurgence of native wildlife including evidence of renewed Koala presence, wallabys and kangaroos, possums and return of native birdlife.*

On-going monitoring over a two-year period has highlighted a decline in weed regrowth, healthy natural regeneration and resurgence of species.

Over 200 species have been recorded on the iNaturalist platform for one section of the Chuwar Conservation Corridor.

Percent cover of Invasive Plant species (May-Jul2024)

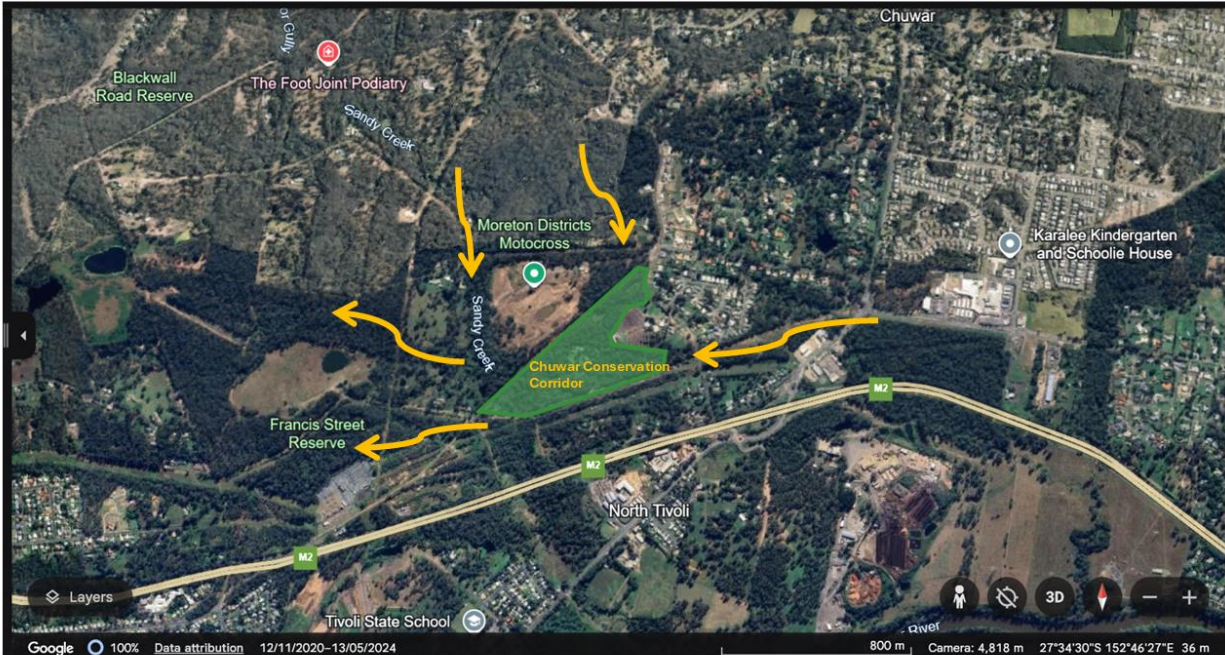




Results of the Koala detection Dog survey depicting observations, waypoints and tracks

Movement of Koalas in the Chuwar Conservation Corridor

In September 2024, a consultant was engaged to undertake a koala presence survey using a trained detection dog. As a result of the survey, significant evidence was observed of Koala movement through the Chuwar Conservation Corridor. As more of the Corridor is protected and restored particularly through the removal of habitat barriers such as Lantana and other weeds, Koala movement is speculated to increase as shown below.



Potential movement of Koalas within the Chuwar Corridor landscape

Vision for the Chuwar Conservation Corridor

The acquisition of the 33 acres of bushland on 22-26 Coal Road, Chuwar will result in the extension of the existing conservation park at 50 Coal Road therefore expanding the protection of a crucial Koala corridor in the area. The property straddles the riparian zone along Sandy Creek where Koalas have been regularly spotted by locals and naturalists. The acquisition of 22-26 Coal Road, currently mostly zoned “future urban”, will provide a unique opportunity to protect and develop a centre for Koala conservation in Ipswich. Specific projects that will be undertaken at the property will include:

- **Rescued Koala Rehabilitation Center:** Goodness Enterprises will partner with local Koala carers as well as University researchers and Koala experts to develop and manage areas within the property where injured Koalas will be rehabilitated for release into the wild.
- **Nature immersion:** The Conservation Team at Goodness Enterprises will design and develop a network of nature trails and interactive experiences to engage visitors in the natural values of the landscape. This will include live streaming of nest box cameras, interactive signage and displays to create an immersive experience for visitors, which will be unique to the Ipswich area.
- **Wildlife displays:** The Chuwar Conservation Corridor is not only important for the Koala but also for other native wildlife. The Conservation team envisions to develop Wildlife displays including a butterfly house, native fish displays and bird hides to further enrich the visitor experience to the site.
- **Outdoor education hub:** Being close to Ipswich city and surrounded by several state and private schools; the Conservation Park and its proposed extension provides an immense opportunity as an education hub like Daisy Hill at Logan. It is vital to engage the next generation in the care and conservation of our unique flora and fauna. Through interactive displays, guided walks and

educational activities at the Conservation Park, this project will play an important role in inspiring the next generation to value our natural areas.



The team clearing weeds, maintaining Koala habitat



Detection Dog marking Koala presence

