



KOALA REHABILITATION REPORT

Introduction

Dear WWF-Australia

The devastating bushfires which impacted Australia and our unique wildlife so significantly throughout the summer of 2019/20 have written an unforgettable chapter into our history, and left a lasting legacy.

Phillip Island Nature Parks became involved with the recovery of bushfire affected wildlife in early January 2020, as some of our team members worked at the wildlife triage and incident control centres across Victoria.

In partnership with Zoos Victoria, the conservation team at the Nature Parks has continued to support the koala victims that had undergone their initial intensive care at Healesville Sanctuary Wildlife Hospital, by providing a critical care and recovery facility at our Koala Conservation Reserve.

Each of the koalas is undergoing its own special rehabilitation process and is being monitored daily by our specialist koala rangers. I am delighted to provide individual updates on the koalas in our care, and include information such as the development of muscular strength, burn and trauma recovery.

It takes time and patience with each animal, and we will continue to monitor and ensure their health and wellbeing is a top priority. At the same time, with the support of WWF-Australia, we will be developing two large semi-wild rehabilitation facilities, which would be the final stage of rehabilitation prior to a release back into the wild.



These exciting initiatives will help cement a formal approach to koala rehabilitation in Victoria and will continue to play a crucial role in managing the impact of any future bushfires.

The challenges that we have been presented globally in 2020 have been unprecedented in many ways, yet through the collaborative and collective support of our networks, we have seen some fantastic outcomes for our biodiversity.

We hope you enjoy the updates.

Regards

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "McKelson".

JESSICA MCKELSON
Conservation Manager
Phillip Island Nature Parks

Jess McKelson and Daniel Kallstrom from Nature Parks with Zoos Vic Leanne Wicker releasing a rescued koala from Mallacoota into our Koala Conservation Centre critical care and recovery facility.



WWF enclosure, ready for new rehabilitation cases.



Bushfire Koala Profiles

Mallacoota Koalas

BLINKY

Female from Mallacoota,
estimated age 2 years old

PEN A - Nature Parks enclosure

Arrived at Healesville Sanctuary on 16 January, after a full assessment by vets she was identified as having burns on her hind and forefeet and chin but appeared bright and normally responsive. Blinky continued to eat both browse and blended leaf well and after a few days she joined two other Mallacoota females (Trip and Solo) in a larger enclosure. Healesville staff continued to treat and monitor Blinky's burns and her bandages were removed after a few days with new pink skin forming yet her chin wound was monitored causing poor Blinky some discomfort. It was also recorded that Blinky had a 'pinky' or newborn joey! Blinky was going from strength to strength, managing well without her dressings although she was bothered by a pruritic or 'itchy' chin, but as she was eating well and showing all signs of recovering from her wounds, she was transferred to Phillip Island Nature Parks, Koala Conservation Reserve on 25 January 2020.

Over the next 2 months, Environment Rangers at Nature Parks continued to monitor Blinky's wounds and assessed her behaviour and activity daily. Blinky continued to eat the lush, fresh browse provided to her, and her pellet counts, scapula muscle coverage, and hair growth on her feet were all great signs that she was on a road to full recovery. In early April, Blinky is still enjoying the company of Solo and Trip as they've now joined the Phillip Island family, and we're fairly certain, due to a bulge in her pouch, that Blinky is going to be a proud Mum in the not too distant future.



Mallacoota Koalas

SOLO

Female from Mallacoota,
estimated age 2 years old

PEN A - Nature Parks enclosure

Arrived at Healesville Sanctuary on 16 January, Solo was bright, responding normally and eating leaf on arrival so was put into an enclosure with another female from Mallacoota named Trip. Solo had sustained burns to both hind feet which were cleaned and bandaged, and she underwent a full health assessment where it was noted she was very sensitive to the effects of sedation. Within a few days Solo's burns were healing well with lovely new pink tissue forming on both feet and no evidence of infection. As Solo was maintaining body weight and with her bandages removed, she was ready to join Trip and Blinky at Phillip Island for further rest and recovery.

On arrival at the Koala Conservation Reserve on Phillip Island on 28 January, Solo was a little nervous at first and climbed up high in her new enclosure. Over time, Solo adjusted to her new home and carers, and started to relax, move around her enclosure and feed on the lush eucalyptus browse provided daily by Nature Park's Environment Rangers. Solo is known for having an 'attitude' and doesn't hold back in letting the Rangers know when she's not happy but all in all she is lively, eating well and has settled into her new Island haven home.

A close-up photograph of a koala named Solo sitting in a tree. She is surrounded by dense green eucalyptus leaves and is actively eating a branch. The koala's fur is a mix of brown and grey, and she has a white patch on her neck. The background is filled with more green foliage, creating a natural, forest-like setting.

Solo

Mallacoota Koalas

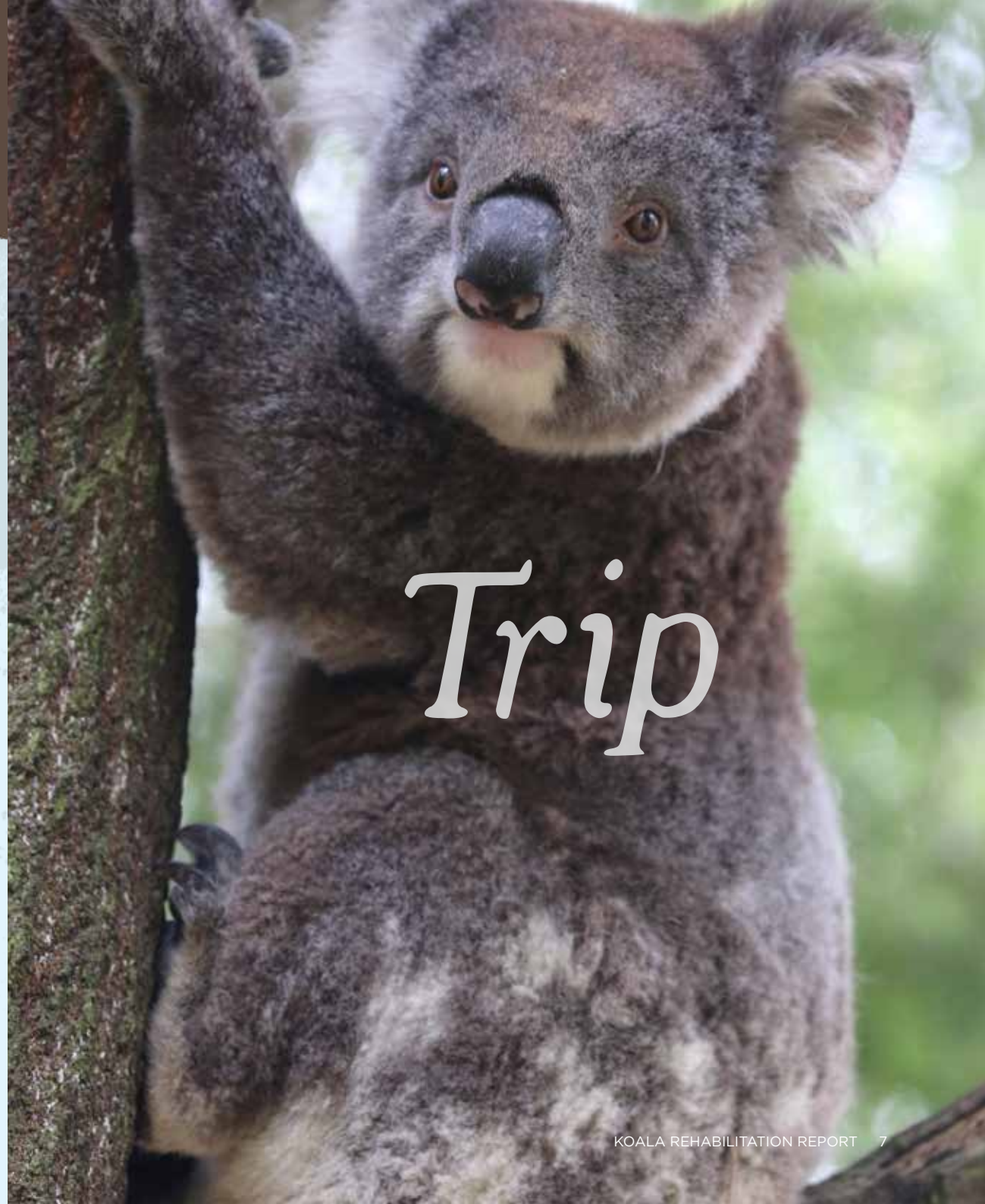
TRIP

Female from Mallacoota,
estimated age 2 years old

PEN A - Nature Parks enclosure

Arrived at Healesville Sanctuary on 16 January, Trip was bright, responding normally and eating leaf on arrival so was put into an enclosure with another female from Mallacoota named Solo. Trip had burns on both forelimbs and one hind limb and minimal fur singe on her body. Trip settled in well from the get-go eating browse both unassisted and from hand feeding and on further assessment it was recorded that she had a 'pinky' or newborn joey. By 21 January, Trip's bandages were removed, and she continued to eat both fresh and blended leaf, Trip remained at Healesville Sanctuary Clinic for another 4 days before making the journey to Phillip Island to join her sisters Blinky and Solo.

Trip is very chilled out and moves about her enclosure trying out the tasty browse provided daily by Nature Parks' Environment Rangers. Trip is in good condition with healthy muscle coverage and weight although she still looks a little worse for wear with her singed fur. Trip keeps to herself, is not bothered when the Rangers are servicing her enclosure and is prone to spending most of her day in her favourite Black Wattle.



Mallacoota Koalas

FRANKIE

Male from Mallacoota,
estimated age 2 years old
PEN G - WWF enclosure

Arrived at Healesville Sanctuary on 21 January, Frankie was placed in an enclosure as he was bright and eating on arrival, however there was some concern about his eyesight due to abnormal response to visual stimuli. After a full health assessment, Frankie was treated for burns on his feet and ears and the Healesville vets recorded a suspected smoke inhalation injury, reduced vision and some unusual behaviour including flicking and scratching of the ears. Frankie was eating well and after a few more days, both his vision and breathing returned to normal and his burns were healing well with regular treatment. By early February, Frankie was eating well, his bandages were removed, and he was prepared for transfer to Phillip Island.

Frankie arrived at the Koala Conservation Reserve on 17 February, where he enjoyed a brand-new enclosure, built through a partnership with WWF-Australia. Straight away, Frankie climbed high up into a mature tree which was a great sign, eventually coming down to try out the delicious browse provided to him by his new carers. Frankie had an unsuspecting visitor one evening, a Brushtail possum, who had to be removed by Environment Rangers the following day. Frankie didn't seem phased by this as he continued to sample the various browse options in his enclosure whilst enjoying the view of two females in the neighboring enclosure.



Frankie

Mallacoota Koalas

ABIGAIL

Female from Mallacoota,
estimated age 2 years old

PEN B - Nature Parks enclosure

Arrived at Healesville Sanctuary on 21 January, Abigail was a little stressed on arrival but soon settled into her enclosure and was observed eating by the end of that day. Abigail continued to eat fresh browse and blended leaf and she was given a day to settle in before a full health assessment. Abigail had sustained several injuries including burns to her fore limbs, hind feet, legs and ears and abdominal wounds. The team at Healesville continued to tend to Abigail's injuries with some additional challenges when her skin reacted to the leucoplast being used on her dressings and dressings not remaining in place. It was a few weeks before she showed signs of healing and her records state she was agitated and aggressive at times when handled and spent majority of her time up high. It was not until the end of March that Abigail was ready for transfer to Phillip Island.

Abigail arrived at the Koala Conservation Reserve on 31 March, on a cold and wet day, and with shaved patches on her body, poor Abigail was noticed shivering in her enclosure. Environment Rangers observed her moving around but only when no staff were present. Abigail has spent her days either moving around the one tree or tightly curled up to keep warm in the colder weather. With good scat count and feed score, she seems to be adjusting to her new enclosure which she is sharing with another Mallacoota female named Annie.



Mallacoota Koalas

ANNIE

Female from Mallacoota,
estimated age 6 years old

PEN B - Nature Parks enclosure

Arrived at Healesville Sanctuary on 16 January, Annie had burns to all four feet and was reluctant to climb in her enclosure, her carers noticed she was not drinking much and only fed well when hand fed. Over the next two weeks, Annie's burns healed although she had a nasty infection in one of her nail beds which was treated regularly to prevent loss of the nail. Annie was bright, responsive and eating well as she continued to heal and although she lost the nail, the team soon saw signs of growth of a new nail. By early March, Annie was eating well with a good faecal count with the vet's report noting she was 'acting more like a wild koala compared to last visit' and after a few more weeks of this behaviour she gained the reputation of being the 'grumpy' one. As Annie continued to eat well and move around easily, she was ready for transfer to Phillip Island by the end of month.

Annie arrived at the Koala Conservation Reserve on 1 April, where she shared an enclosure with Abigail and apparently the two females got off to a vocal start trying to decide who got to climb the tree first. Annie was eating well with a good scat count and continued to move about her enclosure to enjoy the fresh browse provided. Apart from getting a few ticks on her face and having the occasional dispute with Abigail, Annie is recovering well and settling into her new temporary home.



Annie

Mallacoota Koalas

PRINCESS FIONA

Female from Mallacoota,
estimated age 6 years old
PEN I - WWF enclosure

Arrived at Healesville Sanctuary from Melbourne Zoo on 18 February, Princess Fiona had burns to her feet and hands and some damage to nails but the main concern was that she was underweight and dehydrated. On further assessment it was recorded that although Princess Fiona started to eat well, she had markedly poor muscle over the spine and pelvis area. On 24 February, she was moved into a large enclosure to encourage climbing to build body condition as although she was eating, her weight continued to fluctuate. With her burns healed the next challenge for the vets was a distended right abdomen thought to be a hernia but after an ultrasound this was not the case and the team continued to monitor Princess Fiona over a further 3 weeks. The team noticed some abnormal use of her left foot when climbing and a preference to sit mid perch rather than resting in tree forks. To better understand what was going on, the keepers placed a camera on her water trough after it was found overturned on several occasions. The footage showed that Princess Fiona was very active at night and was even seen jumping from perch to ground. As Princess Fiona was eating well and didn't seem inhibited by the abdominal distension, the team at Healesville deemed her ready for transfer to Phillip Island.

Princess Fiona arrived at the Koala Conservation Reserve on 31 March, and sitting low the Environment Rangers were able to get a good look at her nails and she ate well overnight with a good scat count. Princess Fiona continues to move around her enclosure, built in partnership with WWF-Australia, and shared with another Mallacoota female named Vicky. Princess Fiona is settling into her new home, enjoys the fresh browse provided daily and spends quality time in her favourite Blackwood perch during the day.



Princess Fiona

Mallacoota Koalas

VICKY

Female from Mallacoota,
estimated age 2 years old
PEN I - WWF enclosure

Arrived at Healesville Sanctuary on 10 January, Vicky was depressed, very quiet and weak and she had burns on all four feet. Vicky brightened up the following day and started to eat well, it was clear from her behaviour that she did not like being handled but the team needed to attend to her burns as one foot had sustained full thickness burns. Vicky continued to eat well and while treating her burns, the team noticed signs of irritation from burns on her left eyelid and continued periods of dullness. Vicky's burns had damaged several nails, but she continued to eat well, maintain bodyweight and the team started to see signs of nail regrowth. It had been a long and slow recovery for Vicky and by 25 March, she was ready to be transferred to Phillip Island.

Arriving at the Koala Conservation Reserve on 31 March, Vicky shared an enclosure built by WWF-Australia with Princess Fiona. Good scat counts, eating well and climbing were all signs that Vicky was settling right in, spending the colder days curled up high in her favourite blackwood.



Vicky

Bairnsdale Koalas

EMILY

Female from Bairnsdale,
estimated age 1 year old

PEN F - Nature Parks enclosure

Emily was originally at the Bairnsdale Triage Centre as having superficial burns on her feet and was released with her back young. Release staff found Emily on the ground without her young sometime after, and following further assessment, she was treated for burns to all feet. Arriving at Healesville Sanctuary on 25 January, Emily's fore feet burns had healed so the team treated burns on her hindfeet, forelimbs and nose and mouth. Within 2 weeks, Emily was eating fresh and blended leaf, her bandages were removed, and she was healing well, although vets continued to monitor and treat several of her claws damaged from the burns she sustained. Emily lost one claw but once there was signs of regrowth and Emily continued to eat well, she had recovered enough to be ready for transfer to Phillip Island.

Arriving at the Koala Conservation Reserve on 19 March, Emily was a bit shy and spent her first day high up in a Blackwood but after some lovely new browse was provided, she made her way down to eat which was a good sign. Emily shares an enclosure with fellow koalas from Bairnsdale named Jeremy, Rivers and Skye and is enjoying an assortment of big trees in her new home.



Emily

Bairnsdale Koalas

RIVERS

Juvenile male from Bairnsdale,
estimated age 1 year old

PEN F - Nature Parks enclosure

Arriving at Healesville Sanctuary on 22 January, Rivers had burns to his ears, a chin laceration and a bacterial infection from smoke/soot inhalation. As a weaning juvenile, Rivers was orphaned in the fires but was eating well and maintaining weight and when placed in a shared enclosure, was observed bonding with another juvenile male from Bairnsdale named Jeremy.

Arriving at the Koala Conservation Reserve on 17 February, Rivers was active and eating well and his new carers found him to be calm and relaxed in his new enclosure, which he shared with Jeremy and two females, Emily and Skye. Rivers continues to eat well, spending his days either moving about the fresh browse or curled up in his favourite black wattle.



Rivers

Bairnsdale Koalas

SKYE

Female from Bairnsdale,
estimated age almost 4 years old
PEN F – Nature Parks enclosure

Skye was sent from the Bairnsdale Triage Centre to Healesville Sanctuary with her back young, Jeremy, who had been injured in the fires. Skye had singed fur and superficial burns and abrasions to all feet but was otherwise generally in good health. Skye enjoyed both fresh and blended leaf, she was bright and active, and was gaining weight which was important as a lactating mother. Skye remained at Healesville until Jeremy had recovered and was fully weaned then they were both transferred to Phillip Island.

Arriving at the Koala Conservation Reserve on 17 February, Environment Rangers noted that Skye likes to sit up high in trees and she continues to maintain a healthy diet and body weight. Skye is very active in her enclosure, jumping well, and enjoying the lovely fresh browse provided daily. Skye shares her enclosure with Jeremy who is becoming more independent and two other koalas from Bairnsdale named Emily and Rivers.

JEREMY

Male from Bairnsdale,
estimated age 1 year old
PEN F – Nature Parks enclosure

Jeremy was sent to Healesville Sanctuary with his mother, Skye on 12 January and was treated for significant singed fur, burns to all feet and both nostrils and abnormal respiratory function. Jeremy responded well to treatment, showing signs of respiratory improvement and was enjoying the blended leaf and supplement food provided by his carers. Sharing an enclosure with his mother Skye, the team observed them having less interaction as he was weaned and more independent, he was eventually moved to a separate enclosure. The team continued to treat his injuries and as Jeremy was recovering, they considered he may benefit behaviorally from being with his mother and they returned to sharing an enclosure. By 30 January, Jeremy was bright and eating, moving and climbing and was therefore ready to be transferred to Phillip Island.

Arriving at the Koala Conservation Reserve on 17 February, Jeremy is enjoying his new enclosure which he shares with his mother and two other koalas from Bairnsdale named Emily and Rivers. He is active and healthy with a good appetite and Environment Rangers are confident that Jeremy is on the way to a full recovery.



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