

Taking care of koalas this spring

As part of Biodiversity Month, the Department for Environment and Heritage (DEH) is reminding Adelaide residents of the importance of sharing our own habitat with that of our native animals, including the koalas who reside in the Adelaide Hills.

According to Nalini Klopp, from DEH, it is understandable that people are concerned for the welfare of koalas when they see them on the street or in their backyards, but it is important to remember they are wild animals and will respond accordingly if they feel threatened.

"Koalas might appear placid, but don't be fooled. They can be quite aggressive and will scratch and bite in an attempt to protect themselves or their young," she said.

The population in the Adelaide Hills is large and healthy, and so it is not unexpected for them to come down from their branches in search of food, habitat or mates at this time of year.

However Ms Klopp said often koalas don't need to be rescued, and good Samaritans may actually end up doing more harm than good.

"Koalas can become quite stressed when approached or handled by humans, which can sometimes lead to death," she said.

"Instead residents can help by restraining dogs when koalas are nearby, locking pool fences to prevent drowning, being alert for koalas when driving and never put your own safety at risk by trying to rescue a koala on the freeway."

DEH staff will only consider rescuing a koala if it is obviously injured or too young to survive in the wild on its own. In that situation people should call the koala information line for advice.

"Next time you come across a koala which looks lost, just keep the surrounding area safe, admire from afar and call DEH if you are seriously concerned," Ms Klopp said.

Koala information line: Phone 8273 5110.

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