Koalas feel the heat

May 4 2011

Shrinking habitat: Christine Adams-Hosking has found current koala distributions will likely shift to eastern and southern regions where koala populations are already under threat due to high human population densities and ongoing pressures from habitat loss, dog attacks and vehicle collisions.

The Australian koala is vulnerable to climate change, with the iconic Australian marsupial's habitat likely to be restricted to the highly urbanised areas of eastern and southern Australia under a hotter and drier climate, according to a koala researcher from The University of Queensland (UQ) who spoke at a Senate Inquiry this week.

PhD student with UQ's School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Management, Christine Adams-Hosking, has been

modelling the impacts of climate change on koala populations and was called to present her findings to the Senate Inquiry into the status, health and sustainability of Australia's koala population, which is considering listing the species under The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

“The koala is a species highly vulnerable to climate change,” Ms Adams-Hosking said.

“Under a future hotter and drier climate, current koala distributions will likely shift to eastern and southern regions where koala populations are already under threat due to high human population densities and ongoing pressures from habitat loss, dog attacks and vehicle collisions”.

With significant rises in temperature and longer and more severe droughts predicted to occur under future climate change Ms Adams-Hosking's research is identifying refuge areas for Koalas under these conditions.

“My research has modelled where these areas of optimal habitat for koalas will be under future climate change,” she said.

“This will inform conservation planning actions and ensure valuable resources are not wasted”.

“The conservation of adequate habitat that provides refuge areas for koalas under climate change is essential to the survival of Australia's most recognised icon”.
Ms Adams-Hosking's research encompasses koala populations in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria.

In the case of the koala, dry inland habitats are likely to become climatically unsuitable, increasing the need to protect and restore coastal

habitats, which are under threat from urbanisation.

“National and regional koala conservation policies need to anticipate these changes and synergistic threats before its too late” Ms Adams-Hosking said.

Her paper titled ‘Modelling climate-change-induced shifts in the distribution of the koala' was recently published in the Wildlife Research Journal.

Ms Adams-Hosking is part of the Koala Research Network, a group of over 60 researchers from universities and government departments and private groups working with koalas.

Provided by University of Queensland

Citation: Koalas feel the heat (2011, May 4) retrieved 10 April 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2011-05-koalas.html

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.