

SYDNEY BASIN KOALA NETWORK

KOALAS IN CESSNOCK AND LAKE MACQUARIE - UPDATE

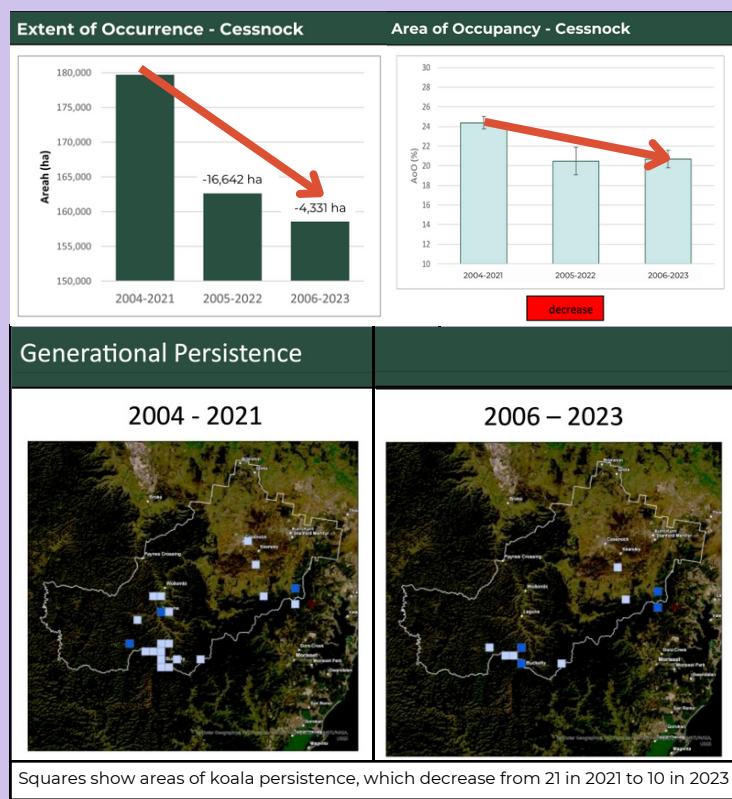
Wonnarua, Awabakal and Darkinung Lands

Update based on [Progress Report](#) by SBKN, EDO, Biolink and TEC. March 2024

Koalas in Cessnock

Alarming, there has been a significant decline in the area where koalas are found and the areas of generational persistence in Cessnock between 2021 and 2023 (1).

Cessnock koalas are in trouble and **we must protect and expand their habitat immediately to reverse this decline.**



Koalas are classified as endangered in NSW. Our report does not indicate that the situation will change and is indeed likely to get worse.



Koalas in Jeopardy

Relentless development of extractive industries in this region are threatening koalas and other species. Lack of transparency and disregard for community input in decision-making, coupled with the absence of a regional plan, hinders the assessment of cumulative impacts of developments resulting in poor decisions. The outcome is catastrophic for biodiversity, as habitat and connectivity are lost. The consequences for koalas are already showing. We need strategic planning to reduce ad-hoc quarry development on koala habitat.

Hunter transmission project proposal cuts through koala habitat.

The Hunter Transmission Project (HTP) proposes to build a new transmission line between Bayswater and Eraring power plants (2). The proposed 115 km transmission line involves clearing in the Jilliby State Conservation Area and Olney State Forest, slicing through an Area of Regional Koala Significance (ARKS) and a Priority Koala Population designated in the NSW Koala Strategy (3). The project also involves clearing in areas of significant Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and native forests that have been identified as crucial climate corridors by HCEC (4).

Despite the existence of two transmission line corridors already connecting Bayswater and Eraring, the proposal opts for an entirely new route. Choosing to bulldoze a new transmission corridor, when alternatives exist, appears illogical. While the transition to renewables must occur, we cannot afford to sacrifice koalas in the process. The destruction of these habitats, particularly for a state-significant koala colony, contradicts Australia's commitment to preventing new extinctions.

Koalas in Lake Macquarie

The area of occupancy and areas of persistence have remained largely stable in Lake Macquarie from 2021 to 2023, while the geographic range of koalas has increased over this timeframe (1).

Lake Macquarie is showing signs of expansion. However this glimmer of hope is dwarfed by the losses in other areas (Like Cessnock) since Lake Macquarie supports a small proportion of the Sydney Basin koala population.

Local Advocacy

Thank you to local collaborators for their advocacy:

- [Hunter Community Environment Centre](#)
- [Koala Koalition Econetwork Port Stephens](#)

If your group would like to join the Network, please contact us: info@sydneybasinkoalanetwork.org.au

Koalas need Connected Habitat

Koalas need to move to access resources and find new mates - **connected habitat is key for resilient koala populations.** Development will continue to destroy and fragment habitat unless protection and connectivity are made a priority. **Protecting and restoring habitat and connectivity is essential to reverse decline and enable koalas to get off the endangered list.**

Legal Reform Needed

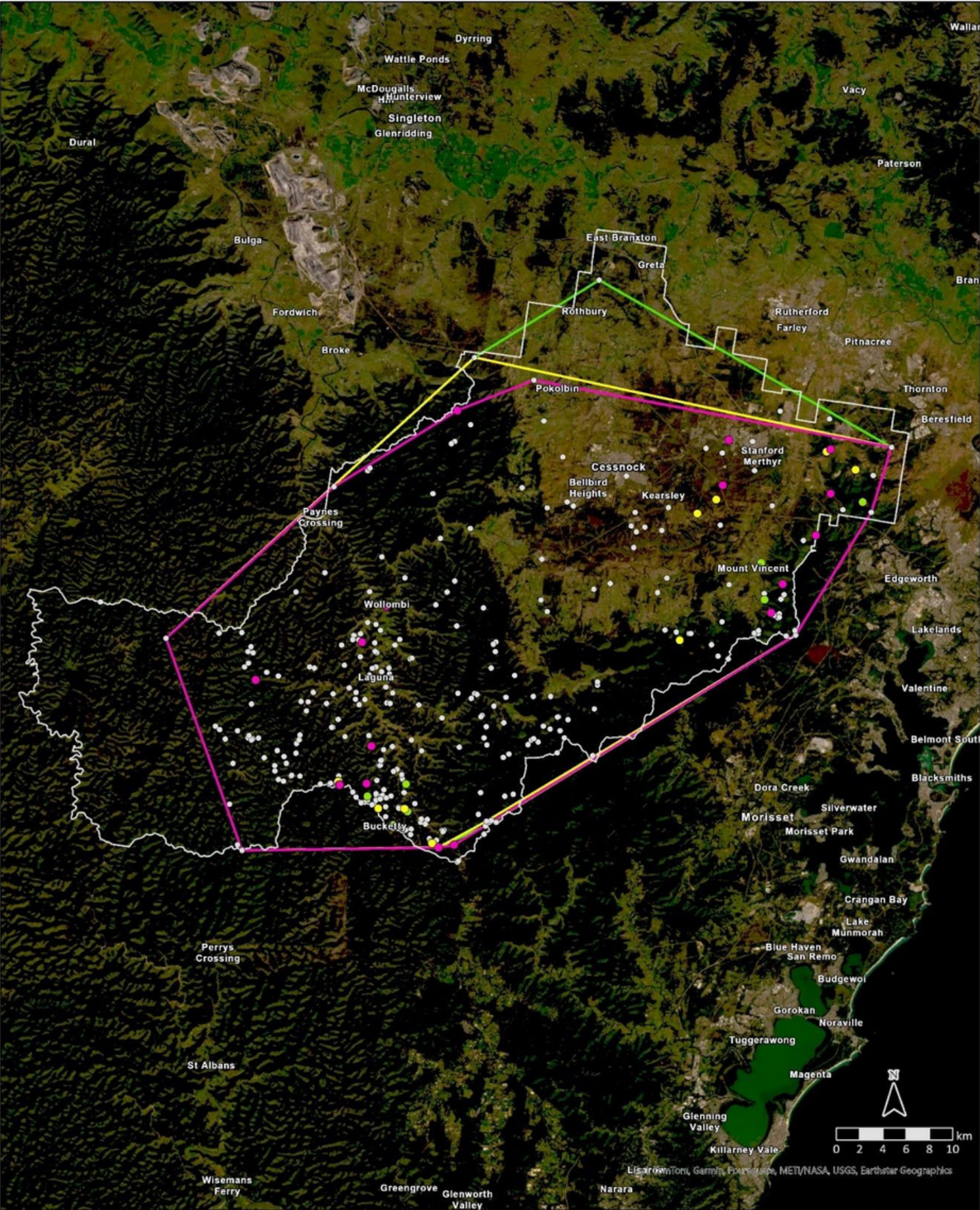
1

Support the development of a Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management for Cessnock and Lake Macquarie LGAs.

2

Reform state laws to deliver certain protection and strong safeguards for koalas in all environmental, planning, forestry and land clearing legislation (1).

Distribution of Koalas in Cessnock



Legend

Year

- 2023 (49)
- 2022 (14)
- 2021 (12)
- pre2021 (327)

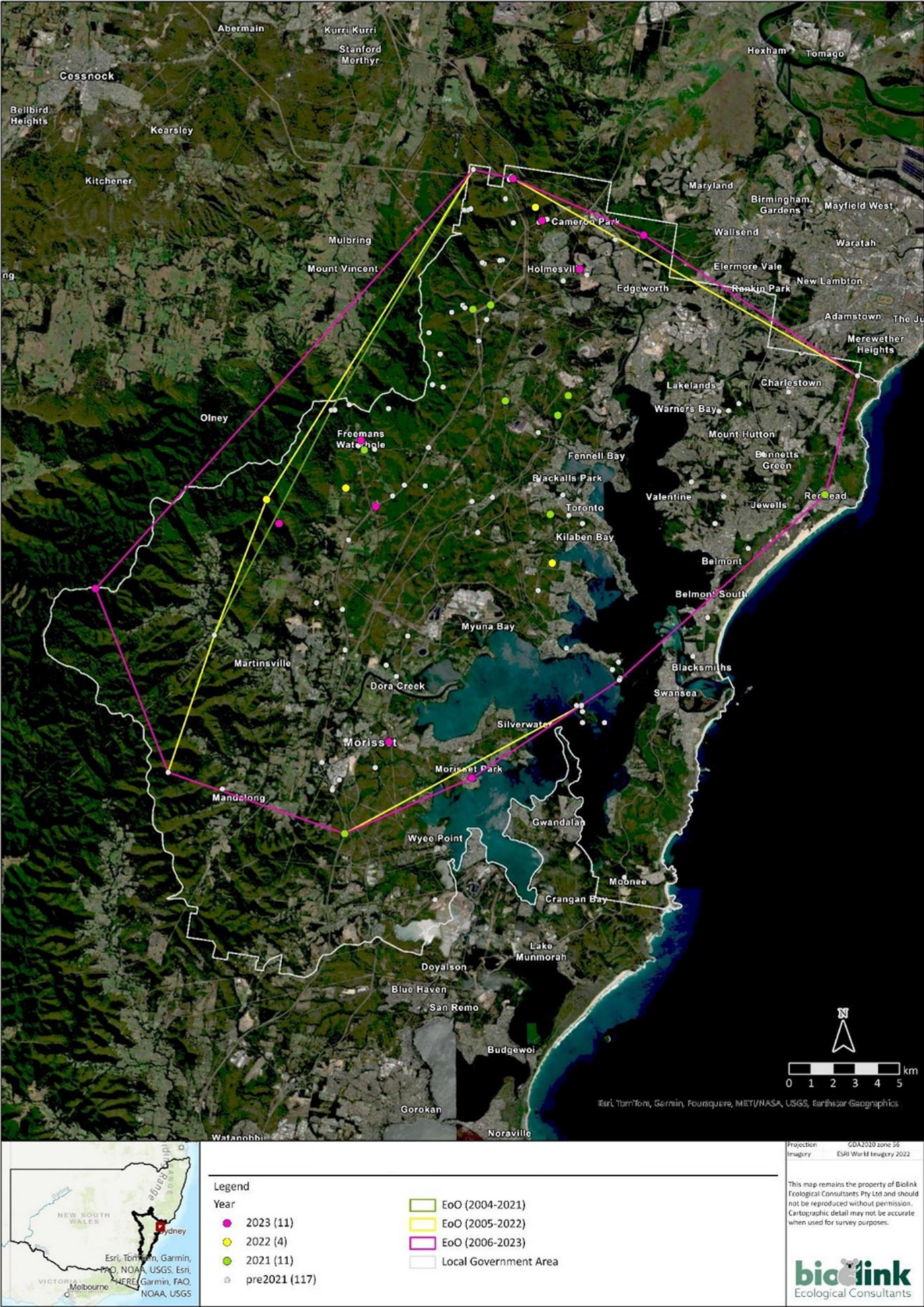
- EoO (2006-2023)
- EoO (2005-2022)
- EoO (2004-2021)
- Local Government Area

Projection: GDA2020 zone 56
Imagery: ESRI World Imagery 2022

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Distribution of Koalas in Lake Macquarie



References

(1) SBKN, EDO, Biolink and TEC, 2024: [State of Koalas in the Sydney Basin. First Annual Assessment](#), March 2024.

(2) [Hunter Transmission Project \(HTP\)](#)

(3) [NSW Koala Strategy](#)

(4) [Barrington to Hawkesbury Climate Corridors](#), HCEC