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National

Koala discovered stranded on top of a 10m power pole in the middle of nowhere

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Source: The Daily Telegraph



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DRENCHED and starving, this little guy could very well be the world's loneliest koala.

The top of a 10m-tall power pole in the middle of nowhere has been this koala's home for the past week.

Completely isolated from its family and natural habitat, it is stuck in the heart of flat farming area in northern NSW and is at least a 6km hike to the nearest eucalyptus tree.

Locals near Gunnedah, about 35km from where this photograph was taken, believe foxes had chased the koala up the pole and left it there to perish.

But wildlife expert Nancy Small said it was most likely in the process of moving from one area to another and using the post as a "safe spot".

"Koalas are a lonely animal - they travel by themselves in circles and into different areas all the time," she said. "It may be walking around at night and then returns to the pole each day as its safe spot."

Mrs Small said cattle in the farming area might have also scared the koala - but was confident it would soon be on its way to find more food.

With koala numbers dwindling in NSW, there is increasing pressure on Environment Minister Tony Burke to list the animal as a threatened species.

Koala numbers were as low as 200,000 nationwide in 2010, down from 430,000 in 1990.

Mrs Small said land clearing was contributing to the decline, with the loss of trees leading to more time on the ground where koalas could be killed by foxes or cars.

Mr Burke is expected to make his ruling next week.