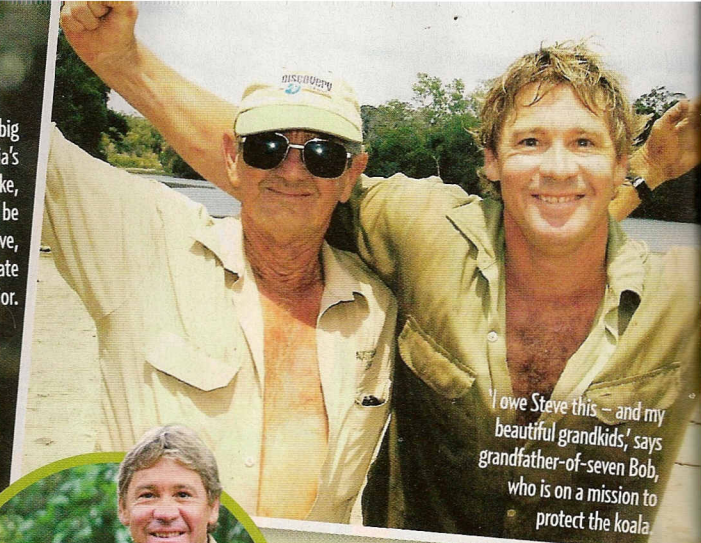
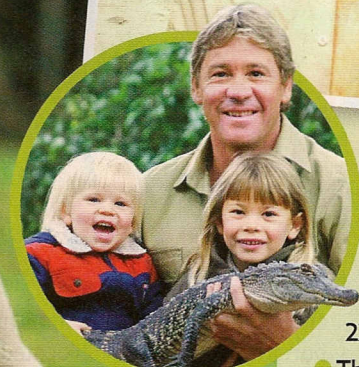


Bob is calling on big business to save Australia's endangered species. 'Take, take, take needs to be replaced with give, give, give,' says the passionate wildlife warrior.



I owe Steve this – and my beautiful grandkids,' says grandfather-of-seven Bob, who is on a mission to protect the koala.



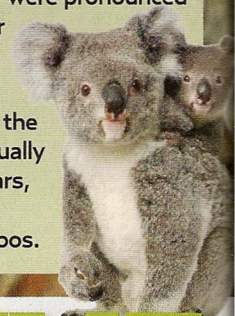
KOALA FACTS

● Koala numbers in south-east Queensland dropped from 6200 in 1996 to 4600 in 2006, then to 2250 in 2008.

● The area showed a 64 per cent decline in numbers in little more than a decade.

● Out of 4714 koalas taken to south-east Queensland infirmaries after being struck on the road between January 1997 and May 2011, almost 3000 were pronounced dead on arrival. Another 849 were immediately euthanised.

● Many experts believe the iconic creatures will virtually be extinct within 50 years, only existing in captive breeding projects and zoos.



Bob Irwin

MY FIGHT FOR STEVE

The conservation veteran keeps his son's legacy alive

When Steve Irwin was tragically killed six years ago, his devoted dad Bob vowed he would carry on his son's work – and he's not about to back down from his promise, no matter who he upsets.

The 72-year-old wildlife warrior is on a mission to save the most treasured of all Aussie icons – the beloved koala. And he says his late son is giving him the

strength to go on despite government indifference.

'The koala is under serious threat of becoming extinct in Queensland, and I plan to fight it to my dying day,' he declares.

Campaigning for the past seven years and battling with plenty of bureaucratic red tape, Bob is frustrated by the apparent lack of concern and remorse from authorities over the consequences of rampant development.

'How's this for disturbing: the most recent head count in the Noosa National Park showed a drop of 80 per cent, leaving a grand total of two koalas in the entire park – two!' he reveals, shaking his head.

Signing off 'willy-nilly' to just about every developer who

knocked on the government's door is what Bob feels marked the beginning of the end for koalas.

'It's pretty simple – their trees get cleared for, say, a housing development, they're disoriented and have nowhere to go. They end up crossing roads looking for a new home, and you know the rest.'

As Bob points out, a staggering number of koalas die every year after literally being thrown from a tree when it's cut down.

'From January 1997 to May 2011, 4714 koalas were checked into three different veterinary facilities in Queensland. Almost 3000 were pronounced dead on arrival, and another 849 were immediately euthanised – and still nothing is being done.

'Add to that all the other things

they are faced with – cancers, viruses – at this rate they're struggling to replace themselves.'

And as Bob calls on all Australians to join the fight, despite the overwhelming task ahead and the indifference of those in authority, he knows he's got someone strong on his side.

'I talk to Steve every day – he's right here,' Bob says, hand on his heart. 'This is a battle we will win.'

'For Bindi and Bob Junior and for all our generations to come, let's roll out that great Aussie spirit we're renowned for – so the next time I have a quiet word with Steve, I know I'll have made him proud.' **NI**

By Lizzie Wilson
Photos: Tertius Pickard