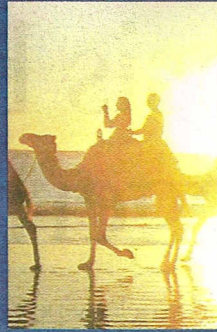
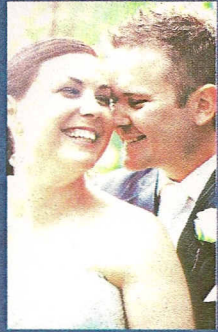




Sunday read



Travelling around



Wedding belles



TO THE RESCUE: Ray Chambers, left, and his brother Murray are always on call to rescue injured wildlife, especially koalas.

Our koala crusaders

Mikaela Blong discovers a Sunshine Coast dynamic duo doing all they can to help native wildlife

BROTHERS Ray and Murray Chambers have always had a passion for fixing cars.

But that passion has had to take a back seat to another, more driving ambition: to help save South-East Queensland's koala population from oblivion. The Moffat Beach residents believe fragmented land and new developments throughout the south-east, and in the Sunshine Coast region in particular, are the biggest threats to one of our smallest native animals.

So for the past six years, these quiet achievers have set up their own wildlife and bird rescue service to assist animals found orphaned in suburbia or injured on roads.

At all hours of the day and night, the Chambers boys have made themselves available for free to pick up, transport and release mostly koalas, kangaroos, possums and birds of all descriptions when residents find these helpless creatures in trouble.

But Ray and Murray desperately want to shift that up a gear.

The brothers' non-profit organisation, the Sunshine Coast Koala Wildlife Rescue (SCKWR), is struggling and they believe they could do more for the animals if they had steady financial support and a newer, more reliable vehicle.

"We're filling a void," Murray said.

"A lot of koala calls are at night time and there is no-one else. So we thought, 'Bugger it, we'll do it.'"

At present, the brothers volunteer 18 to 20 hours each per week at the Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital, rescuing and helping animals in their spare



ANIMALS WITHOUT A VOICE: Koalas' habitat is under threat in the region.

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

time, while also working full-time in their mechanical repairs business.

The brothers use a 2004 Holden Rodeo twin cab to attend the rescues, but admit that vehicle is starting to fail them, and they find themselves constantly needing to spend time in repairs and maintenance.

As special cages are needed to transport the koalas and other wildlife, the twin cab has proven to be ideal.

Thankfully, good-natured Murray has kindly turned his own ute into a temporary rescue machine, but rescue operations are still a struggle.

"A lot of the time when you do koala rescues, you need two people," he said.

"It's a bit hard on your own, so if you have a twin cab, you're right - you can just stick them (koalas) on the back seat."

Their love of animals began at an early age while growing up with scotch collie dogs and progressed as they volunteered with the non-profit Moreton Bay Rescuers, requiring long hours of training.

Realising the Coast did not have a similar organisation, "we thought, 'Stuff it, we will start our own up here'," Murray said.

But trying to make people aware of the devastating situation for koalas, especially, on the Coast is the biggest problem the Chambers face.

In recent months, the brothers have been involved in re-

planting hundreds of eucalyptus trees in Nambour and Noosa.

Ray has begun giving his time to help educate children in schools and community groups to be aware that our native animals are unique and need protecting. But he believes attitudes in the wider community need to change.

"It's got to happen on a big level and it's got to happen now," Ray said. "Koalas should be on the endangered list."

"Governments are failing in preserving our native koalas and they (members of parliament) should be accountable."

Murray added: "Koalas are a slow breeder and they don't live for a long time."

"So they have got two things against them and they're not used to fragmented land."

If you can help Ray and Murray with a suitable vehicle or donations towards the SCKWR, contact them for more information on 0423 618 740 (Ray) and 0431 300 729 (Murray).