



Amazing Animals Fact sheets

Koalas

We often hear these adorable Aussies called "koala bears" but they are actually not bears at all. Koalas are marsupials, so they carry their young in a pouch, unlike bears which carry their young in the womb until they are well developed.

The koala lives almost entirely on eucalypt leaves and they have a very low metabolic rate for a mammal, which is why they can sleep for up to 20 hours a day!



Koala

Koalas vary in size and colour depending on where they live in Australia. Koalas found in the southern distributions (Southern NSW and Victoria) tend to be slightly larger and darker than those in the northern areas (Northern NSW and QLD). This is likely to be related to the different temperatures and is a feature exhibited by many species whose distribution encompasses large climatic variations. The most notable physical aspect of the Koala would have to be its big fluffy ears. Koalas have a great sense of hearing and an even better sense of smell. This is how they select which leaves are the best to eat. Their eyesight is not too good, and therefore detection of predators is generally by sound. They possess very strong forearms and extremely long, sharp claws for climbing.

Habitat

Koalas are found in eucalypt forests around the Eastern and South Eastern coast of Australia. The majority of wild Koalas are found on private property thus meaning there is no formal protection of this habitat. It is not known why some areas are absent of Koalas despite the presence of a food source, but it is possible that historically hunting has driven local populations to extinction.

Diet

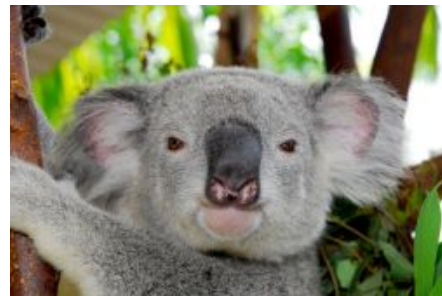
Koalas eat eucalypt leaves but only from certain species. There are over 700 Eucalyptus species occurring within

Australia, however the Koala will eat leaves from less than 30 of these species. Out of the palatable varieties, less than one dozen are staples. They prefer the 'tip' of the branches, which is the juiciest and softest leaves are and eat around 500g of leaf per day. Of course wild Koalas have to depend on whatever leaf is available and during the cooler months will often be forced to eat the more mature leaves.

Breeding

When a female Koala is ready to breed she will call out to a male by letting out a loud snorting bellow. The female gives birth 35 days after mating. When born, the joey weighs only half a gram and is the size of a kidney bean at about 2cm long. It stays attached to its mother's teat for 13 weeks, its eyes are open at 22 weeks and it gains teeth at 24 weeks. At around the 7 month age bracket, the joey will start taking short spells climbing on its mother's back and is usually independent at about 12 months old.

Australia Zoo Koala profiles



Jaffa

Jaffa would have to be the Zoo's coolest little dude! Right from birth, Jaffa developed a huge fan base, with his gorgeous pink smudgy nose and white cheeks.

Jaffa was born into Australia Zoo's 'Sweetie' family, with mum Flossy (fairy floss), brother Minti and little sister Taffy. Jaffa's name came about because when he first came out of Flossy's pouch, his coat was a very orange colour.

Due to his placid nature, Jaffa is quite the superstar, with appearances in many magazines, television shows and photo shoots. All in a day's work for this cuddly boy!

Endangered Species!

Very low numbers are left in the wild. Koalas are at risk of extinction within the next ten years.

Although still classed as common in most areas, the extensive destruction of habitat has directly resulted in a dramatic drop in koala numbers. Urbanisation has also placed increasing pressure on existing populations through the dangers of roads and domestic dogs.

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