



KOALA

Endangered

Vulnerable

Critically Endangered

Extinct in the Wild

Extinct



Common name

Koala

Scientific name

Phascolarctos cinereus

Habitat

Koalas can be found in a wide range of habitats from open eucalypt woodlands to melaleuca heath, but their home is usually defined by particular food trees, such as some eucalypt species. Koalas can be found in other types of trees too, seeking shade and shelter. Koalas tend to prefer food trees which grow on more fertile soils and along watercourses such as rivers or creeks. They have also been found to stay in areas where their habitat has been partially cleared and in urban areas.

Habitat range/distribution

Koalas live in a range of bushland areas from the New South Wales border north to Cairns, and west through central Queensland. They can be found in bushland patches, in scattered trees near city centres, in tree corridors along river beds and at the roadside, and in national parks. More koalas live in south east Queensland than anywhere else in the state. However this is where they compete for space and habitat with growing numbers of humans and development.

Description

Koalas are well-known for their large round head, big furry ears, big black nose and two opposing thumbs. Their fur is pale to dark grey-brown in colour with white fur on the chest, inner arms, ears and bottom. Koalas have particularly hard bottoms, which allows them to wedge comfortably in tree forks for long periods of time.

Adult male koalas are often larger than adult female koalas, and have a large scent gland on their chest. Adult female koalas have a white chest and a backward facing pouch for their young—called joeys!

Key threats

Koalas face a range of threats including habitat loss, impacts from high intensity bushfires and climate change, disease, dog attacks and car strikes. The biggest threat to koalas is habitat loss. Much of the koala's habitat in Queensland overlaps with areas where significant clearing has occurred, and continues to occur, for urban, industrial and rural development.

What is being done to help protect and conserve this species

The Queensland Government has introduced strong koala protections to restrict the clearing of koala habitat and have also partnered with the Queensland Trust for Nature to restore koala habitat, including through tree planting.

The koala hospital network, which includes people who work at the Moggill Koala Rehabilitation Centre, Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital, Currumbin Wildlife Hospital and RSPCA Queensland, plays a very important role in helping sick or injured koalas to ensure they're healthy again and can be released back into the wild.

The Queensland Government and numerous researchers are monitoring koala populations across south east Queensland to detect population trends, analyse genetics, monitor health and inform management decisions.

Become a koala champion

- Keep native vegetation in your backyard or plant eucalypt trees.
- Drive carefully and look out for koala crossing signs.
- Build koala-friendly fencing, this may be as simple as adding a couple of extra posts to allow koalas to climb over safely.
- Look at ways to make sure koalas can't drown in your pool, such as floating a sturdy rope for koalas to pull themselves out with.
- Contact the RSPCA on 1300 ANIMAL (1300 264 625) if you suspect a koala is unhealthy and in need of assistance.
- Talk to your friends and family about threats to koalas and what they can do.



SENTENCE SOLVERS

Use the words below to complete the sentences.

BOROBI	JOEYS	WATER	SLEEP
HEARING	POUCH	VISION	EUCALPYT

1. Koalas can _____ for up to 20 hours a day! Koalas need lots of _____ due to their low energy diet.
2. Koalas can eat up to 500g of _____ leaves each day (approximately the size of a small lettuce).
3. The leaves can contain up to 50% _____. This removes the need for koalas to climb down a tree for a drink, except during very hot or dry periods.
4. _____ in the Gold Coast traditional language, Yugambeh-Mibbuni, was the mascot for the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games.
5. Koalas have poor _____ but have excellent _____ which helps them detect predators and other koalas.
6. Baby koalas, called _____, stay in their mother's _____ for six months after being born. The _____ will then spend between 6-12 months riding on its mother's back.

FUN FACTS

- Although you may have heard people call them koala 'bears', these animals aren't bears at all—they are in fact marsupials. A group of mammals, most marsupials have pouches where their newborns develop.
- Koalas have five digits on each front paw, two of which are opposed to the others, much like our thumbs are able to be moved differently from the fingers. This helps them to hold firmly onto the branches and to grip their food. The 2nd and 3rd digits on their hind paws are fused together to form a grooming claw.
- Koalas also communicate with each other by making a range of noises. The most startling and unexpected of these in such a seemingly gentle animal is a sound like a loud snore and then a belch, known as a 'bellow'.



Answers

1. SLEEP 2. EUCALPYT 3. WATER 4. BOROBI 5. VISION 6. HEARING / HEARING / POUCH