

Queensland Koala

Scientific Name: *Phascolarctos cinereus*

Class: Mammalia

Order: Diprotodontia

Family: Phascolarctidae



The koala has a small, compact body (28-32 in.), a vestigial tail and large ears. Males, at about 26 lbs., are larger than the 17 lb. females. Males have a scent gland on the chest and females have a rear-facing pouch. The koala is adapted to its almost exclusively arboreal life. The large paws have long claws for grasping tree limbs. The dense wooly fur, gray above and white below, makes the koala extremely difficult to see. Their hands have two opposable thumbs and three fingers.

Range

Eastern Australia from southeast Queensland to southeastern South Australia.

Habitat

Eucalyptus forest

Gestation

30 to 35 days gestation and 5 - 7 months in the pouch.

Litter

1 -2

Behavior

The koala is mostly nocturnal and usually solitary. They are accomplished climbers and can rapidly ascend a tree in a bounding movement. On the ground they move in an unhurried quadrupedal walk but can move quickly if the situation demands it. Their low-quality diet of leaves provides little usable energy and the koala typically sleeps 18 hours per day.

Reproduction

Koalas typically associate only for mating. After a short gestation period the female licks a trail of saliva from the pouch to the cloaca. The joey emerges and follows that trail up to the pouch, where the mammary glands are. After about 5 months it climbs out of the pouch and onto the mother's back, where it stays until it is about a year old. It makes the transition from milk to solid food by eating partially digested leaves from the mother's cecum. Females bear one young every two years. Females will also adopt abandoned babies.

Wild Diet

Eucalyptus leaves and bark. Koalas seldom drink water.