

Red Kangaroo

Scientific Name: *Macropus rufus*

Class: Mammalia

Order: Diprotodontia

Family: Macropodidae



Faithful to the family name (Macropodidae means big foot), the red kangaroo has large elongated hind feet that enable the animal to make great leaps. The “red” part of the name refers to the fur of the male’s back and chest, which turns a brilliant red during the breeding season. At other times the male is mostly gray or brown. The females are colored gray or blue-gray at all times. Mature males may be twice the size of females. An adult kangaroo can travel at 40 m.p.h. for short distances, leap 27 feet at a bound, and clear a 10-ft. high fence if pressed. Like all marsupials, red kangaroos are born in an extremely immature state. A male is called a boomer, a female is a blue-flyer, a baby is a joey, and a group of kangaroos is called a mob.

Range

Australia

Habitat

Grasslands, with no trees or brush

Gestation

33 days, then about 240 days in the pouch

Litter

1

Behavior

An adult kangaroo can travel at 40 m.p.h. for short distances, leap 27 feet at a bound, and clear a 10-ft. high fence if pressed. However, kangaroos panic easily and may bunch up against a fence they could clear if they tried. They are mostly grazers but seek the shelter of woodlands when alarmed. Kangaroos have coped with humans very well and large populations exist at this time, but hunters take a large harvest every year.

Reproduction

Red kangaroos are born in an extremely immature state. The baby must crawl without assistance from the birth canal to the pouch. Once there it attaches itself to a nipple which it does not release for 70 days. It first pokes its head out of the pouch at about 150 days, and about 40 days later begins to leave the pouch for short periods. At about 235 to 240 days it leaves the pouch for good. It still suckles until a year old. A singular feature of kangaroos is their ability to suckle an infant in the pouch simultaneously with a departed by as yet un-weaned joey, while a fertilized egg may be in the uterus and will emerge as a fetus when the oldest joey departs for good.

Wild Diet

Primarily leaves and fruit, namely wild figs