

KOALAS

Phascolarctos cinereus

The koala is not a 'bear'. It is a tree-dwelling, medium-sized marsupial with a stocky body, large rounded ears, sharp claws & variable but predominantly grey-coloured fur. Males generally are larger than females. Koalas are mostly nocturnal & often sleep for up to 18-20 hours each day to conserve their energy as the eucalypt leaf (their main diet) is so low in nutrients.

DISTRIBUTION & HABITAT

The koala is native to Australia & is widely distributed from northern Queensland to west of Adelaide in South Australia. Koalas live in a range of temperate, sub-tropical and tropical forest, woodland and semi-arid communities dominated by eucalypt species.

DIET

There are over 900 species of eucalypt in Australia – koalas are known to feed on selected species depending on locality & prefer to limit their diet to about 10 types of eucalypt that naturally occur in their location. An adult Koala eats about 1/2 - 1kg of leaves each night. Koalas don't normally need to drink (except in drought) as they get most of the moisture they need from the leaves.

LIFE EXPECTANCY & BREEDING

Average lifespan in the wild is 15-18 years for females; 10-15 years



for males. Younger breeding females usually give birth to 1 Joey each year. When the Joey is born, it's only about 2 centimetres long, is blind and furless and its ears are not yet developed. The Joey stays in its mother's pouch for about 6 or 7 months, drinking only her milk.



CONSERVATION STATUS

VULNERABLE (IUCN Red List of Threatened Species).

