

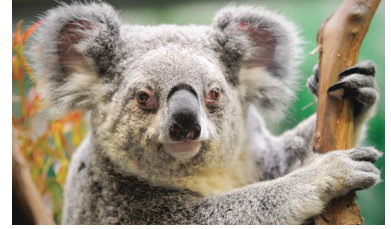
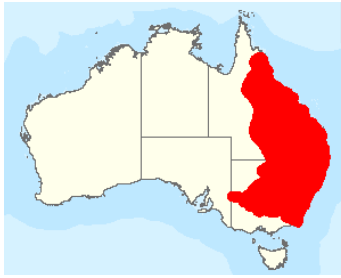
QUEENSLAND KOALA

MARSUPIALIA

Family: Phascolarctidae

Genus: *Phascolarctus*

Species: *cinereus*
adustus



Range: Queensland, New South Wales, & Victoria

Habitat: coastal eucalyptus forests

Niche: arboreal, nocturnal, herbivorous

Wild diet: mature leaves c. 50 species of eucalyptus, may eat mistletoe and Australian box

Zoo diet: eucalyptus leaves

Life Span: (Wild) 20 yrs
(Captivity) 20 yrs

Sexual dimorphism: M slightly larger than F. M has chest gland. F has pouch opening to rear and extending up and forward

Location in SF Zoo: Koala Crossing

APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

Dense woolly fur that is gray to tawny above and whitish below. The rump is dappled while the ears are large, hairy, and fringed in white. The body is compact and head is large with a leathery black nose on a short muzzle while the palms and soles are granular. Both fore and hind feet have 5 toes and all are strongly clawed except the first digit on hind feet that is short and broad. The hind feet have second and third digits are almost completely fused but with separate claws. On the forefeet, the first two digits are in opposition to the other three digits to provide a good grip. The longer forelimbs make walking awkward.

Adults have a 7' cecum, where microbes break down cellulose and detoxify eucalyptus oils that are toxic to many other animals. They sleep 18-20 hours/day as the eucalyptus provides them a poor nutrient diet and they have a very low metabolic rate.

The dental formula is I-3/1 - C-1/0 - P-1/1 - M-4/2 x 2 = 30. Cheek teeth are reduced to a single premolar and four broad high-cusped molars on each jaw, which finely grind the leaves for easier digestion.

Weight:	M 26 lbs
	F 17.4 lbs
HBL:	M 30.7 in.
	F 28.3 in.

STATUS & CONSERVATION

After nearly becoming extinct earlier this century, they are now fully protected by the Australian government. Because of large-scale clearing of native forest, many of the areas of suitable habitat now occur in small isolated patches. This shortage of suitable habitat complicates the future management of surplus animals. It has also been documented that over 4000 koalas are killed each year by dogs and cars. In the past, koalas were killed for their coats. From 1919 to 1924 eight million koalas were killed. Today, the koala is threatened by a disease caused by the *Chlamydia* bacteria that has spread through most of the population. Koalas are listed as Vulnerable but with the recent 2019 fires, estimates at this time are unknown.

COMMUNICATION AND OTHER BEHAVIOR

Males emit a series of harsh inhalations each followed by a resonant, growling expiration. These calls advertise an individual's presence while warning other males to stay away. The only vocalization commonly heard from females and sub-adult males is a harsh wailing distress call, given usually when being harassed by adult males.

Outside the breeding season there is little obvious social behavior. While neighboring animals are doubtless aware of each other's presence, there are few interactions and no apparent social groupings. These animals sleep high in a fork of a tree most of the day. They are slow and sluggish on ground, where they traverse to either reach another tree or lick up soil or gravel. They are mostly solitary in the non-breeding season.

COURTSHIP AND YOUNG

Males and females meet only in mating season. Males stake out territories by producing a powerful scent from their sternal gland. Males will have several females with them but do not maintain a harem all year. During breeding seasons, males are very active at night constantly moving through their range ejecting male rivals and mating with receptive females. Koalas generally birth a single joey though twins have been recorded. At birth, the joey is the size of a jelly bean; it has no hair, no ears, and is blind. Joeys crawl into their mother's pouch immediately after birth, and stay there for about six months. Toward the end of pouch life, in addition to nursing the young feed on incompletely digested eucalyptus passed through the mother's digestive tract ("pap"), which prepares their own digestive tract for their adult diet. Older young leave the pouch and ride on their mother's back.

Estrous seasonally polyestrous, 27-30 d in Oct-Feb	Sexual Maturity: M is 4 yrs / F is 2
Gestation: 25 - 35 days / pouch 7 months	Weaning Age: 6-12 mos
# of Mammae: 1 pair in pouch	Weight at birth:
# of Young: 1 (occasional twins)	

MISCELLANEOUS

The Australian aboriginal name means "never drink" since Koalas get most of the moisture they need from their leaf diet of eucalyptus. The strong-smelling oil in eucalyptus gives these animals a characteristic odor. Because of the unique ecological niche they occupy, the koalas meet little or no competition in their native range.

There are 3 sub-species:

P.c. adustus (Queensland)

P.c. cinereus (New South Wales)

P.c. victor (Victoria)

Sources:

(2, 6, 12, 26)

MacDonald © 1984 p 872-5

<http://www.thekoala.com/koala/>

<http://www.sandiegozoo.org/animalbytes/t-koala.html>

update: 12/86, 11/07, 3/20