

# KOALA

*Phascolarctos cinereus*

**STATUS**  
Vulnerable  
NSW

**STATUS**  
Not vulnerable  
National

*Koala conservation status is identified by separate legislation in each state and varies across the animal's range.*



## WHERE DO THEY LIVE?

- Koala populations are patchily distributed within eastern Australia, from north-eastern Queensland to south-eastern South Australia and west of the Great Dividing Range.
- They are an arboreal (tree dwelling) marsupial. They are restricted to the eucalypt forests and semi-open woodlands.
- Koalas will reside in relatively demarcated home ranges and while they are largely solitary animals, both male and female home ranges can overlap.

## DIET

- They are folivores and one of only 3 Australian marsupial species that have evolved to specialize in a nutrient poor diet of tree species, predominantly from the genera Eucalyptus and Corymbia.
- Eucalyptus – there is a total of 800 species in Australia – they only eat 80.

## AT WILD LIFE SYDNEY ZOO

- We have 14 koalas located either in foyer, Gumtree Valley or Koala Encounters.
- There are 6 boys their names are Jay, Sid, Jack, Bill, Aaron and Bruce.
- We have 8 females their names are Faith, Elle, Kyara, Lara, Erica, Precious, Sammy and Samara.
- They receive variety of bundles of eucalyptus browse. This is changed in the morning and topped up in the afternoon.
- Koalas are weighed weekly to monitor their health.

## WILD FACTS

- Gestation is from 34 – 36 days with birth of the joey followed by occupancy of the pouch. The joey will remain in the pouch for approximately 5 – 7 months and will establish initial exploratory movements at 8 – 9 months of age. They reach independence at 12 months of age.
- Between pouch emergence and independence koala joeys feed on maternal milk and faecal material believed to be vital for ingestion of microbiological flora essential for digestion of eucalyptus leaves.
- There is evidence that 'non food' trees are selected for daytime use. These trees provide benefits of shade and suitable resting places, and the advantage of predator avoidance, as opposed to sources of food.
- Koalas have an evident social organization as a result of male dominance hierarchies.
- Avoidance behaviours such as olfactory and auditory signals are ways in which they communicate.
- Males emit a low pitched bellow vocalization, to threaten other males, and interrupt mating through the use of female encounter calls.
- Males also possess a large odiferous (smelly) sternal gland that is thought to play a role in defining territory, as tree marking is seen more notably during the breeding season.



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## LIFESPAN

Females 12-14 years  
Males 10-12 years

## WEIGHT IN QLD

Females 4.1 - 7.3 kg  
Males 4.2 - 9.1 kg

## WEIGHT IN VIC

Females 7 - 11 kg  
Males 9.5 - 14.9 kg



## CONSERVATION AND EDUCATION RELEVANCE

- **HABITAT LOSS** is the most significant cause of koala population declines. Clearing is mainly associated with urban development in coastal regions as well as agricultural and mining development.
- **WILD Profiles**
- Updated 16/11/2013
- Low elevation agricultural lands may be pivotal to the management of koala populations. However, preferential selection by the koala of certain eucalypt species, particularly on higher nutrient soils, often corresponds with areas selected for farming.
- Habitat fragmentation: koalas are increasingly forced to move across cleared lands, urban districts and roads where the probability of mortality from road deaths and predation is considerably higher. Restricted gene flow among koala populations over large areas may occur and affect the populations response to disease.
- The most significant disease affecting koala populations is associated with chlamydial infections.
- Chlamydia is associated with a range of symptoms, including eye infections and respiratory and urinary tract infections.
- The disease may directly affect mortality rates while infection of the reproductive tract may lead to female infertility, affecting the reproductive success of severely affected and isolated populations. **NOTE:** humans cannot contract Chlamydia from koalas.
- Drought may affect koala populations, especially if it occurs over long periods and increased frequencies. Drought conditions decrease the nutritional quality of food trees. This places increased emphasis on the prospect of climate change and the long term effect on populations. **VIDEO**
- -Fires have always posed a factor in mortality rates. Immediate effects include incineration, injury and burns associated with exposure to fire. Indirect effects occur through loss of food in the post- fire period and through dog predation when animals are on the ground.
- Proper management of koalas requires agreement on their status, yet these animals are under subject of a variety of official status designations and public perceptions, in part because of dispute over population sizes, trends and threats.

