



# The Mini Page

**Next Week:**  
Counting U.S. citizens

Issue 11, 2020

Founded by Betty Debnam

## Meet the Koala



photo by albaglorias

### Mini Fact:

The word "koala" comes from an Aboriginal word meaning "no drink."

During the recent bushfires in Australia, the news has been full of reports of animals being stranded among the flames and smoke. Experts believe more than 1 billion native animals have died in the fires.

One of Australia's more recognizable animals is the koala. Thousands of these cute creatures may have died during the fire crisis, but humans are helping rescue as many as possible.

### Marsupials

While we sometimes call koalas "bears," they are not. Koalas are **marsupials** (mar-SOOP-ee-uls). Marsupial moms raise babies in their pouches.

When a koala is born, it is hairless and weighs less than an ounce. It is about the size of a jelly bean.



photo by Matthias Appel

After birth, the baby, called a joey, crawls into its mother's pouch, where it attaches itself to one of her two nipples and nurses for about six or seven months. When it comes out of the pouch, it is fully developed.

Koala babies must eat some of their mom's droppings while they are very young. These "pap" droppings contain certain bacteria that enable the koala to digest the special food it eats for the rest of its life.

### Picky eaters

Koalas eat only the tender leaves and bark of certain kinds of eucalyptus (yoo-kuh-LIP-tuss) trees. Many kinds of these trees grow in Australia, but koalas are picky about the ones they will eat.

Since there is so much moisture in the leaves, koalas drink very little water. They also may eat dirt when they come down to the ground to move from tree to tree. The dirt may help their digestion.

Their diet of about a pound of eucalyptus leaves a day does not supply them much energy. They spend 18 to 21 hours a day asleep in their treetop homes. Koalas are most likely to be awake at dawn and dusk.

### Habitat loss

Aside from the bushfires that have been destroying forests in Australia, the biggest threat to koalas is loss of their habitat from people clearing the land for buildings, roads and homes. Experts also say "dieback," when eucalypt forests are damaged and die because of nearby development, destroys the koalas' homes.



Bushfires burn in Australia in December 2019.

photo by GLEN MOREY/via REUTERS

### Other marsupials

• **Kangaroos.** There are about 60 different types of kangaroos. Some can grow to be 6 feet tall and weigh about 200 pounds. They are the world's largest marsupials.



photo by Eric Kibby

Kangaroos usually move about in the late afternoon or at night, eating grasses and other plants.

They can easily leap higher than a grown man stands, and can travel almost 50 miles per hour.

• **Wombats.** People don't get to see wombats very often. They live only in Australia. During the day, wombats stay underground, sleeping. They don't usually come out of their burrows until night.

Wombats dig long underground tunnels, or **burrows**. A group of wombats may share the burrow.

• **Pygmy possums.** The pygmy possum is one of the world's tiniest marsupials.

It might weigh just a half-ounce and be only 3 inches long. It moves about mostly at night, feeding on nectar and pollen.



photo by Michael Pennay

## Resources



### On the Web:

- [bit.ly/MPkoala](http://bit.ly/MPkoala)

### At the library:

- "Jimmy the Joey: The True Story of an Amazing Koala Rescue" by Deborah Lee Rose

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## Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of koalas are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:



- AUSTRALIA, BARK, BURROW, BUSHFIRE, DIEBACK, EUCALYPTUS, FOREST, HABITAT, JOEY, KANGAROO, KOALA, LEAVES, MARSUPIAL, PAP, POSSUM, POUCH, PYGMY, SLEEP, TREES, WATER, WOMBAT.

I Z H L E U C A L Y P T U S O  
S L A E E P K T P O S S U M T  
E A B O R I A U S T R A L I A  
E I I S I P N P K E A P V B B  
R P T E F E G H P C R L Y Y M  
T U A V H E A W C Y A O A E O  
K S T A S L R K A U G B F O W  
L R C E U S O Q R T O M E J K  
F A M L B Y O Y R A E P Y I O  
P M L K T W O R R U B R U O D

## Cook's Corner

### Koala Kookies

#### You'll need:

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 4 tablespoons powdered sugar, plus extra for sprinkling
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup walnuts, chopped



\* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

#### What to do:

1. Mix butter and powdered sugar in a large bowl until smooth and creamy.
2. Add vanilla extract. Mix well.
3. Add flour and walnuts. Mix well.
4. Roll into small balls and flatten on a greased baking sheet.
5. Bake in a preheated 350-degree oven for 12 to 15 minutes.
6. When cookies are cool, sprinkle powdered sugar on top. Makes about 5 dozen.

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### For later:

Look in your newspaper for articles about animal rescues in Australia.

**Teachers:** Follow and interact with The Mini Page on Facebook!



1. Something that stands for something else; emblem (6-letter noun)

□ □ □ □ □ □

2. Covered with a thick, soft coat of hair (5-letter adjective)

□ □ □ □ □

3. Feeling of being without courage; shy (5-letter adjective)

□ □ □ □ □

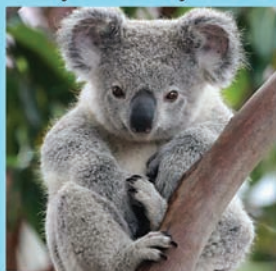
4. The highest part of a woody plant (7-letter noun)

□ □ □ □ □ □ □

1. This sign, -, is the \_\_\_\_\_ used in math to subtract.
2. Suzanna likes to wear \_\_\_\_\_ slippers to keep warm.
3. The \_\_\_\_\_ puppy was scared and hid behind a chair.
4. Mark's cat climbed rapidly all the way up to the \_\_\_\_\_.

### ROOTONYM®

by Jan & Carey Orr Cook



Study the definition. When you know the missing word, fill in the letter boxes and the sentence blanks.

Answers: Symbol, Furry, Timid, Treetop.

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