

Koala Fact Sheet

Fast facts

- The Queensland koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus adustus*) is an **arboreal folivore**. This means it lives in a tree and eats leaves.
- Koalas are **marsupials** with a pouch. When the joey is about 35 days old it crawls into the pouch where it will stay for the next 6-8 months.
- Koalas are relatively large with males growing to ~10kg and females ~8kg.
- Despite their size and easy to identify shape, koalas are very difficult to locate in the wild.



Camouflage

Koala fur is blue-grey to dark grey on the head, back and limbs. This becomes darker with age. Their underside is white. Like us, this gets greyer as they get older. Their hindquarters are flecked with white. These patches become more obvious as the koala gets older.

This colouration is like a shark, providing almost perfect camouflage from both above and below. This is enhanced by the koala's behaviour. When they perceive a threat, they sit still, moulded to the curve of a eucalyptus tree or may move around the trunk to avoid being spotted. The koala is often found in foliage clumps at the end of branches, in vine tangles or high in the canopy.

Food

Koalas mainly eat eucalypt (gum tree) leaves (about 400-500g of leaves per day). They can be very picky and preferred tree species vary between localities. Gum leaves aren't good food and koalas have a specialised digestive system to deal with their potentially toxic diet, as well as resting most of the day to conserve energy.

Koala Trees

Koalas are very fussy eaters and have strong regional preferences for certain eucalypt species. These are important koala food trees in South East Queensland: Forest Red Gum or Queensland Blue Gum, Tallowwood, Small-fruited grey gum and Red stringybark.

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Koala Challenges

Agricultural and urban development is a major threat as it leads to tree loss, and exposes koalas to predation by dogs and being killed by cars as they move from one tree to the next. Stressed koalas are more prone to diseases like Chlamydia infections.

What signs do I look for?

To do a survey of your local bushland first check you have 'koala trees' i.e. eucalypts. Check each tree carefully from at least two directions to make sure you can see all the canopy. Koalas are very good at hiding. **By day**, other than the koalas themselves, you can look for the following signs:



You can also look for scat (or poo). Koalas produce about 150 pellets a day!

By night you can try spotlighting with a bright torch – koalas have a bright white eye-shine, but will quickly look away from the spotlight. You can also try listening for male koalas during the mating season August to January/February with the best time to listen being sunrise and sunset.

To find out more about koalas:

Australian Museum Fact Sheet

<https://australianmuseum.net.au/uploads/documents/27761/koala%20fact%20sheet%20may%202014.pdf>

Koala information on the Queensland Government's website

<https://www.ehp.qld.gov.au/wildlife/koalas/>

Australian Koala Foundation

<https://www.savethekoala.com/>