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Koala and Joey

Young marsupials stay close to Mom!

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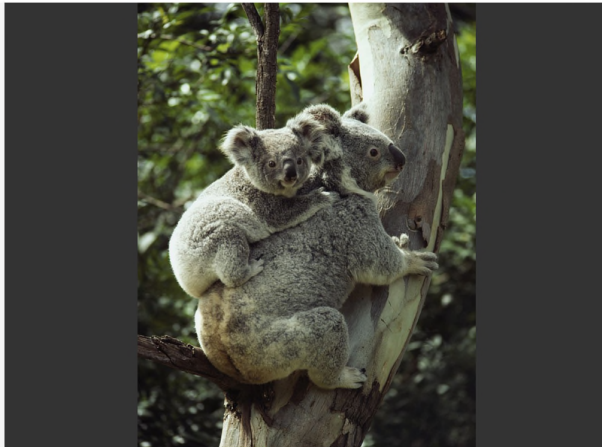
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IMAGE

Koalas Climb A Eucalyptus Tree

A koala hugs a tree while her baby clings to her back at the Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary near Brisbane, Queensland, Australia. Koalas have adapted to only eat the leaves of eucalyptus trees. Eucalyptus are very low in protein and toxic to many animal species. Being able to digest eucalyptus leaves is an adaptation that benefits the koala by providing it a food source for which there is little competition.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANNE KEISER



BACKGROUND INFO

QUESTIONS

VOCABULARY

Koalas are marsupials native to coastal regions of Australia. Marsupials are mammals, just like dogs, cats, and human beings. These mammals are called placental mammals. Unlike placental mammals, marsupials give birth to tiny, underdeveloped young. Female marsupials have a pouch on their bellies, which they can zip and unzip by using a special muscle. Baby marsupials stay protected in their mother's pouch instead of inside her body. Other marsupials include kangaroos, wallabies, wombats, and opossums.

Like all marsupial babies, baby koalas are called joeys. A koala joey is the size of a jellybean! 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. That's about how long it takes for them to see, grow ears and hair, and walk (or waddle) on their own.

When they're about six months old, joeys venture out into the world, although they stay pretty close to their mother—usually by riding on her back, like this one.

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