

AUSTRALIAN ANIMALS

Individual work

1. Read your text carefully and try to understand it.
 - Use a dictionary as necessary.
 - Read or survey you notetaking sheet.
 - Read the text again.

2. Complete the notetaking sheet for your text
 - Write key words.
 - Do NOT write complete sentences.
 - Choose the most interesting facts. You do not need to write down information about everything.

Jigsaw presentations (round robin)

- When sharing your answers
 - Use short sentences.
- When you are listening to someone else sharing his/her answers:
 - Take notes to complete your chart.
 - Write key words, not complete sentences.
 - If you do not understand, ask for help :
 - * Please repeat.
 - * What did you say about X?
 - * How do you spell X?

KOALA	EMU	LAUGHING KOOKABURRA	WOMBAT
1. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length/Weight • Ears • Fur • Hands/Feet 	1. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length/Weight • Feathers • Wings/Legs 	1. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length/Weight • Colors 	1. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length/Weight • Colors • Legs • Other

2.HABITAT	2. THEIR RUN	2.LAUGH	2.THEIR RUN
3.FOOD	3.FOOD	3.HABITAT	3.THEIR DIG
4.HAVING BABIES	4.HAVING BABIES	4.FOOD	4.FOOD
5.FUTURE	5.FUTURE	5.HAVING BABIES	5.HAVING BABIES

AUSTRALIAN ANIMALS: KOALA



Cuddly koalas

Have you ever heard someone refer to a koala as a "koala bear?" Well, like bears they are mammals, and they have round, fuzzy ears and look cute and cuddly, like a teddy bear. But koalas are not bears. They are members of a group of pouched animals called marsupials. Marsupials include kangaroos, wallabies, wallaroos, wombats, possums, and opossums. Many kinds of marsupials are native to Australia. Koalas look soft but their fur actually feels like the wool on a sheep. They also seem cuddly, but they are wild animals and don't make good pets.

Born to climb

A koala, like other marsupials, begins life in a very unusual way. When it is born, it is only about the size of a large jelly bean and is not yet fully developed. In fact, a newborn koala, called a joey, can't even see or hear, but it sure can climb! Soon after the joey is born, it uses strong forelimbs and hands to crawl from the birth canal into its mother's pouch. In this warm, safe place the joey attaches to one of two nipples, drinks milk, and grows during the next six months. Even after it starts leaving the pouch, a joey will return to the pouch when it wants to hide or sleep. Sometimes it will ride on its mother's belly. After it grows too large for the pouch, the joey climbs onto its mother's back and holds on with strong hands and feet. After about a year, it can live alone in the trees.

To help it climb, a koala has special hands and feet, both of which have claws. A koala has two thumbs on its hands, and the ridged skin on the bottom of its feet gives it traction for climbing. Strong arm and shoulder muscles help a koala climb 150 feet (46 meters) to the top of a tree, and enable it to leap from treetop to treetop.

Why trees?

Koalas are basically slow-moving animals that need to sleep a lot and take a long time to digest their food. Being on the ground all the time would be a disadvantage, because predators could catch them easily. So instead they adapted to live way up in eucalyptus trees, their behinds firmly planted in the forks of branches, so they can chew leaves and nap all they want without feeling threatened. But they do travel on the ground, as well, to get from tree to tree or to a new area.

Catering to koalas

Koalas only eat eucalyptus leaves. Eating leaves from one kind of plant may seem boring, but there are more than 600 different kinds of eucalyptus trees and, from a koala's point of view, each looks and tastes very different! Koalas prefer the leaves of about three dozen varieties. Joeys learn to eat eucalyptus leaves on their own gradually. At first the joey goes after leaves with its mouth. Its early attempts look like a game of bobbing for apples, with its nose getting in the way and pushing the leaves out of reach! Fortunately, joeys keep trying until they are successful. Eventually they figure out how to grab leaves with their front paws and put them in their mouths.

These picky eaters can then select their favorite varieties. Koalas eat 1 to 1.5 pounds (454 to 680 grams) of leaves each day. Eucalyptus leaves are poisonous to most animals, but koalas have special bacteria in their stomachs that break down the toxic oils. Special cheek teeth grind the tough eucalyptus leaves. Koalas don't get many calories from their diet, but they conserve energy by moving slowly and by sleeping as much as 20 hours each day. Just because they sleep a lot does not mean they are quiet, boring animals.

AUSTRALIAN ANIMALS: EMU



Primordial birds

Tall and majestic, the emu belongs to a group of flightless running birds known as ratites, the most primitive of the modern bird families. The ratite family includes the kiwi, ostrich, cassowary, and rhea, all birds found only in the Southern Hemisphere. The soft-feathered, brownish emu is common throughout most of mainland Australia, although it avoids big cities, dense forests, and deserts. The emu is the second-largest living bird in the world (the ostrich is the largest), with adult female emus being larger and heavier than the males.

Horse feathers!

Individual emu feathers have a very loose and simple design. Just like hairs, feathers grow from follicles. Typically, birds have one feather per follicle, but the emu grows a double-shafted feather from each follicle. The closely-knit barbs found on a typical feather are widely spaced on the emu feather and don't have the usual hooks that attach to the other barbs. Instead, each barb hangs loosely and gives emu feathers a hairlike appearance. Other ratites share this feathery design. When new feathers grow, they are almost black in color, but the sun soon fades them to a grayish brown while the shafts and the tips of the feathers remain black. Emu feathers are less water-resistant than other birds' feathers. An emu's tail feathers are not so soft. Instead, they are stiff and can be rattled by the bird to scare off predators, such as dingoes.

Born to run

Emus have tiny, relatively useless wings, but their legs are long and very powerful. They can travel long distances at a fast trot and can sprint at 30 miles per hour (48 kilometers per hour) for quite a distance. Emus are the only birds with calf muscles. Their feet have three toes and fewer bones and muscles than those of flying birds. Their strong legs also allow the bird to jump 7 feet (2.1 meters) straight up. With good eyesight and amazing agility, emus can escape most any trouble!

Seasonal taste treats

Emus are omnivores and typically look for food during the day. They eat a variety of plants, depending on the season. For example, they will eat *Acacia* seeds until the rains come, afterward eating new grass shoots and caterpillars. In wintertime, they feed on the leaves and pods of *Cassia*. Springtime brings beetles, grasshoppers, and fruit. They also eat crickets, ladybugs, lizards, moth larvae, and ants.

Stay-at-home dads

Emus form breeding pairs in the summer and typically stay together through the fall, when the first clutch of eggs is laid. The male builds a rough nest of twigs, leaves, and grass on the ground where the female lays 5 to 15 eggs over the span of several days. Once the female is done, she wanders off, leaving the male to incubate the eggs. It's a good thing he ate extra food to build up his reserves of body fat before the breeding season, because he stays on the nest for the next eight weeks, getting up only to turn the eggs, and will lose up to one-third of his body weight. Females may or may not find another male to mate with during this time. This second male may incubate his own clutch, or the female might find the nest of another emu pair where she can lay her eggs. In a good season, a female emu may lay three complete clutches!

Sunny-side up!

One emu egg has the same weight and volume as 10 to 12 chicken eggs! The eggs are dark teal green and shiny, with small pits on the surface. The brown-and-cream-striped chicks are precocial and can leave the nest at about three days old, but they usually stay with their father for nearly 18 months. The father teaches his offspring how to find food and stay safe from dingoes and foxes. Emus are full-grown at 12 to 14 months but don't reach sexual maturity until about 2 years of age.

AUSTRALIAN ANIMALS: LAUGHING KOOKABURRA



The plain bird with the fancy voice

The laughing kookaburra is the largest member of the kingfisher family and was once called the giant kingfisher. Most kingfishers are brightly colored—often blue or green—and many of them specialize in diving into streams and ponds to catch fish. The laughing kookaburra, however, is plainly colored and rarely eats fish! It has a light beige or white head and breast with brown wings and back. The head has a brown stripe like a mask crossing each eye. The beak is heavy and boat-shaped. The kookaburra's breast has pale gray, wavy lines, and the outsides of the wings are speckled with pale blue dots. The male laughing kookaburra often has blue above the base of the tail. Both sexes have a rusty red tail with black bars and white tips. The female is slightly larger than the male.

Good for a laugh

It may be fairly drab, but you won't think the laughing kookaburra is ordinary after it opens its beak! The laughing kookaburra is known as the "bushman's alarm clock" because it has a very loud call, usually performed by a family group at dawn and dusk, that sounds like a variety of trills, chortles, belly laughs, and hoots. The call starts and ends with a low chuckle and has a shrieking "laugh" in the middle. The song is a way the birds advertise their territory. These birds are native to woodlands and open forests in Australia, where they perch in large trees and nest in cavities of tree trunks and branches. They keep the same territory year-round, and family groups gather together to announce the boundaries with their distinctive calls. Laughing kookaburras also have different, shorter calls used for finding others, courtship, raising an alarm, showing aggression, and begging for food.

But they don't eat fish!

Even though they are kingfishers, laughing kookaburras eat more reptiles and rodents than fish. The birds also eat frogs and they are known to be bold and steal food from picnics, sometimes snatching hot meat straight from the barbeque! The parent birds often give small snakes to the chicks so they can learn how to kill prey.

When hunting, a laughing kookaburra sits motionless on a perch and watches for prey to pass by. The bird can keep its head perfectly still while its body sways with the branch below. When prey is sighted, the kookaburra swoops down, lands next to it, and grabs it with its bill. It carries the food back to a perch and beats it several times against the branch to kill and soften the prey. Snakes are sometimes dropped from midair onto the ground for tenderizing! The prey is swallowed head first and whole.

It's nice to have help

A breeding pair establishes a year-round territory that is also used by four to five of its grown young that serve as helpers. They help by incubating the eggs, keeping the chicks warm, feeding their young siblings, and defending their parents' territory. At about four years of age, the helpers leave to establish their own territories. Kookaburras can live 10 to 12 years in the wild, and they are not threatened or endangered.

Family life

Adult kookaburras pair for life and use the same nest hole, found in a tree trunk or arboreal termite nest, each year. Courtship starts by the male feeding the female about six weeks before she lays her eggs. The female will lay two or three eggs, but the nest may also include two or three eggs laid by female helpers. All members of the group develop brood patches (a bare space on the breast with lots of blood vessels for warming the eggs). The chicks are ready to fledge 33 to 39 days after they hatch. They still need the group for food for two months after fledging.

AUSTRALIAN ANIMALS: WOMBAT



What's a wombat?

Wombats are one of the oddest-looking animals you'll ever see! They look like short, stocky bears. But wombats are really marsupials, related to koalas and kangaroos. They are either sandy brown or grayish black to blend in with the landscape and avoid predators. The sturdy wombat is most active in the early evening and at night.

The common wombat has coarse fur and short, round ears while the hairy-nosed wombats have soft fur and much larger ears. Although wombats look cute and cuddly, they tend to have a short temper and can become very aggressive if they feel threatened.

A mighty rear end

The common wombat is the most numerous and widespread, living in forests along the eastern coasts of Australia and in Tasmania. Unfortunately, two formidable predators inhabit the same areas: the dingo and the Tasmanian devil.

Wombats walk with a waddle. They may look pudgy and slow, but they have powerful legs and can run up to 25 miles per hour (40 kilometers per hour) when needed! If threatened, a wombat dives headfirst into a tunnel, blocking the entrance with its sturdy backside. Wombats have a tough rear end with extra-thick skin and a teeny-tiny tail, so a bite to the backside is not much of a threat. They have been known to crush intruding animals against the hard walls and low ceilings of their burrows.

Bulldozers of the bush

Like kangaroos, the wombat spends most of its time grazing. They use their rodent-like teeth and very strong jaws to grip and tear food such as grasses, roots, shoots, tubers, and even tree bark. A special stomach gland helps wombats easily digest the tough food.

Wombats don't need much water, getting most of their needed moisture from the plants that they eat. They are often seen grazing at night, when their coloration helps them blend in, but they may also feed during the day if it's cool and cloudy.

Can you dig it?

Well, wombats can! Wide, strong feet with large claws make the wombat a master at "digging it"! From the burrow, they dig impressive tunnels underground that lead to sleeping chambers. They dig with great zest and energy, moving up to three feet of dirt in a single night. The burrow usually has one entrance but then branches out into several tunnels that can reach up to 650 feet (200 meters) in length. The common wombat remains fairly solitary in its burrow home, but the southern hairy-nosed wombat often shares its home with up to a dozen other wombats.

Just a joey

Common wombat females give birth to a single young, called a joey, every two years. Like all marsupial females, the wombat has a pouch—but it opens toward the rear, rather than toward her head. This keeps dirt from filling up the pouch when the mother wombat is busy digging!

When the joey is born, it is the size of a jelly bean and not completely developed. It must crawl from the birth canal into the mother's pouch and attach itself to a nipple. The joey doesn't even try to peek out of the pouch until it is 6 months old, and it stays in this pouch for 9 to 10 months of age, growing and getting all the nourishment and warmth it needs there. The youngster continues to return to the mother to feed until it is 12 to 15 months of age.