



The Mini Page

Next Week:
Back to the moon

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Founded by Betty Debnam



Meet the Marsupials

photo by AJ Penrose

You don't have to travel all the way to Australia or South America to see marsupials. Many of them can be observed at zoos in the Northern Hemisphere.

Marsupials (mar-SOO-pee-uhls) are mammals that carry their babies in a pouch on the mother's abdomen. This week, The Mini Page learns more about these unusual animals.

At birth

When a marsupial is born, it is hairless and weighs less than an ounce. It crawls into the mother's pouch and attaches itself to her teat, where it nurses and grows until it can live on its own, usually for several months. Even after a **joey**, or baby marsupial, ventures out from the pouch, it returns there to sleep and when there is danger.

Kangaroos

Kangaroos are part of the macropod family. There are four species of large kangaroos: the red kangaroo (largest marsupial in the world), eastern gray kangaroo, western gray kangaroo and antilopine kangaroo. These are all found in Australia.



photo by Ff0002/PagetaFotos

Other macropods include tree kangaroos, wallaroos, pademelons, quokkas and rat kangaroos. These comprise about 60 species.

Kangaroos are the only large mammals that hop on two feet to move around. The large red kangaroo can hop up to about 40 mph.

Kangaroos are **herbivores**, or vegetation eaters. They eat grasses, shrubs and fungi. A group of kangaroos is called a **mob**.

Although many of kangaroos' original predators are now extinct, they can be threatened by dingoes, foxes, **feral**, or wild, cats, and domestic and feral dogs.

Koalas

Koalas may look like bears, but they are not. Their closest relatives are wombats. They are found only in Australia, along the eastern and southern coasts.

Koalas spend most of their lives in trees and move around at night. Their only food is the leaves of eucalyptus trees. They may sleep for 20 hours a day.



photo by Benhamin444

Koalas live to be 13 to 18 years old in the wild. They have few predators, including dingoes, pythons and some birds.

Through their lives, their chewing teeth wear down, and eventually they are unable to eat.

Wombats

Wombats are well known for the long tunnels they burrow with their teeth and front feet.



photo by JJ Harrison

They are native to Australia. The female has a pouch that faces backward so it does not fill with dirt when she is burrowing. Wombat **scat**, or poop, is cube-shaped.

Tasmanian devils

You may know Taz, the cartoon character, from Looney Toons cartoons, but Tasmanian devils are real animals.



In the wild, they are found only on the island of Tasmania, just off the southeastern tip of Australia.

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature, Tasmanian devils are classified as endangered. This means they are likely to become extinct in their native homes.



photo by Nathan Rupert

Tasmanian devils are about the size of a small dog. Unlike many other marsupials, Tasmanian devils are **carnivores**: They hunt prey and eat **carion**, or dead animals. They have the strongest bite strength relative to their body size of any mammalian carnivore. One of their favorite prey is wombats.

Devils have a bad odor and a loud screech. Their black fur and fierce teeth give them a frightening appearance.

Resources



On the Web:

- activewild.com/list-of-marsupials
- bit.ly/3M8sE35

At the library:

- "Spotlight on Nature: Kangaroo" by Pamela Dell
- "Quokkas!" by Hope Aicher

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Try 'n' Find

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



- CARNIVORE, CARRION,
- DEVIL, DINGO,
- HERBIVORE, HOP, JOEY,
- KANGAROO, KOALA,
- MACROPOD, MARSUPIAL,
- MOB, POUCH, PREY,
- QUOKKA, TASMANIA,
- WALLAROO, WOMBAT.

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

Cook's Corner

Vegemite and Cheese Scrolls

You'll need:

- 2 sheets frozen puff pastry (defrosted)
- 3 tablespoons Vegemite
- 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese

What to do:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line a baking tray with parchment paper and set aside.
2. Spread each sheet of pastry with 1 1/2 tablespoons of Vegemite and sprinkle 1 cup of cheese evenly over each sheet.
3. Roll each sheet tightly into a scroll and slice the scroll evenly into 12 pieces.
4. Place the pieces on the tray and bake for 10 to 15 minutes. Serves 2.

Vegemite is a favorite food spread in Australia.



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

Mini Jokes



Kyle: What do you call a lazy baby kangaroo?

Kaylee: A pouch potato!

Kimmy: What do stylish kangaroos wear?

Kevin: Jumpsuits!

Eco Note



A 13-year-old pet cow in Austria named Veronika is the subject of the first scientifically documented case of tool use by cattle. Writing in the journal *Current Biology*, researchers say they observed her using a wooden broom to scratch hard-to-reach parts of her body, deliberately switching between the bristled end and the smooth handle depending on skin sensitivity. Across 70 trials, Veronika repeatedly picked up, oriented and applied the tool in a goal-directed and flexible fashion. Scientists say this behavior meets the criteria for true tool use, a cognitive skill previously documented in animals such as chimpanzees, elephants and crows.

adapted with permission from Earthweek.com

For later:

Look in your local newspaper for stories about unusual animals.

7 Little Words for Kids

Use the letters in the boxes to make a word with the same meaning as the clue. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in the solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.



1. hornet's weapon (7) _____
2. cook in an oven (4) _____
3. work out at the gym (8) _____
4. make a copy (9) _____
5. animal you can ride (5) _____
6. tasting like sugar (5) _____
7. very valuable (8) _____

CISE	SE	GER	ATE
LIC	EXER	PRE	SW
EET	US	DUP	BA
KE	STIN	HOR	CIO

Answers: stinger, bake, exercise, duplicate, horse, sweet, precious.

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