

# Gumnut Gazette

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## Everything To Know About Koalas

### Tree dwelling

Koalas are arboreal animals, meaning they live in and are specially adapted to living in trees.

They have two thumbs (called opposable thumbs) and three fingers on each hand; a total of 5 digits on each front paw. These adaptations, along with their very sharp claws, help

them to climb and grip branches securely.

They also have hard cartilage on their bottoms, which helps them sit comfortably in the fork of a tree for long period of time.



*Opposable thumbs*

All the photos above are credit to the keepers at Cleland Wildlife Park

### Acknowledgement to country

The Department for Environment and Water acknowledges Aboriginal people as the First Peoples and Nations of the lands and waters we live and work upon and we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge and respect the deep

spiritual connection and the relationship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to Country.

The Department works in partnership with the First Peoples of South Australia and supports their Nations to take a leading role in caring for their Country.

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### Fingerprints

Koalas have unique fingerprints that are like humans.



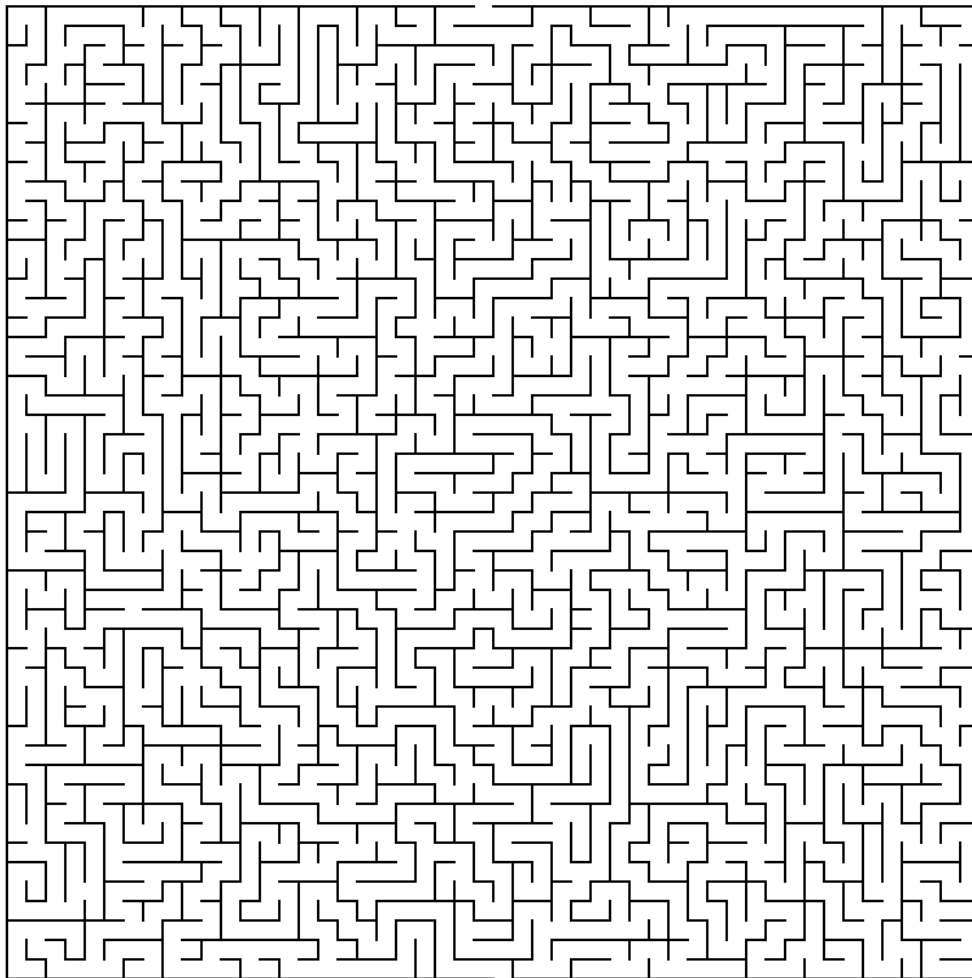
# Fun and games

## Maze

Find your way

Start at the top and work your way through the maze to the bottom.

Start



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Maze credit to <https://www.mazegenerator.net/>

How many 'thumbs' does a koala have on one paw?

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### True or False

Koala babies are called 'Joey's' **T/F**

Koalas have great eyesight **T/F**

Koalas are completely native to Australia **T/F**

Is this a Male or Female koala?



# Not a Bear

## A Marsupial

Koalas have fur, are warm-blooded and feed milk to their babies, which makes them mammals. They also belong to a group called marsupials, which carry their underdeveloped young in a pouch while they continue to grow.

A koala's gestation period is just over one month. When the babies are born, they are the size of a jellybean and will find their way into their mother's pouch, where they will stay for around 6 months.



### Did you know?

From about 6 months koala joeys will start feeding on pap.

This koala joey would be about 4-5 months old. Photo credit to Cleland Wildlife Park Staff.

Joey koalas must eat 'pap', a special kind of poo their mother produces to give the joeys the important gut bacteria needed to digest toxic eucalyptus leaves.

## Fussy Eaters

It is true that koalas eat only eucalyptus leaves, however they are quite picky about which ones they eat. There are over 700 species of eucalyptus, but koalas will only eat around 50 of them, often sticking to just 1-3 species found within their local area. Before eating, koalas sniff the leaves to check toxin levels to determine whether they are safe to consume.



This is Bungee the koala munching on delicious tip, photo credit to Koala Keeper Ash



## Myth busted...

It's true that the nutritional value of gum leaves is very low, similar to a human surviving on lettuce alone. Because of this, koalas can sleep for up to 20-22 hours a day. Their diet is not only low in nutrients but also contains toxins, which requires a lot of energy to digest.

Koalas are not "high" from eating gum leaves; they are simply very tired from the effort required to process their food.



Photo credit to Koala Keeper Ash.

### Did you know?

Gestation period means the time from when a baby starts growing until it is born.



# Fun and games



Photo credit of 'Koala and flower' to Kaewta, Freepik Company S.L.U, 2010-2026.

## Did you know?

Koalas have a special 'grooming claw' on their back foot.

## Did you know?

Marsupials are animals with a special way of having babies. Their babies are born very tiny and not fully developed, and they continue to grow and develop inside their mother's pouch.

Placental mammals (such as humans, dogs, and monkeys) carry their babies inside the womb for a long time. As a result, the babies are more fully developed at birth.



# Female vs Male Koalas

## Important to note:

While koalas may look cuddly, it's important to remember that they are wild animals and should be admired from a distance.

### Males:

- Are bigger than females.
- Have a visible scent gland (brown stain) on their white chest.
- They have broader heads and a larger nose.
- Males make a loud bellow sound during breeding season to attract females.



Male koala at Cleland Wildlife Park photo credit to Koala Keeper

*Although koalas look cute, they have very sharp claws for climbing and living in trees and have sharp teeth for snip through tough eucalyptus leaves.*

## Did you know?

The scientific name for the koala is *Phascolarctos cinereus*, and it is the only surviving member of the *Phascolarctidae* family.

During the time of the megafauna, there was also a species called *Phascolarctos stirtoni*, which was roughly one-third larger than koalas today.

### Females:

- Are smaller than the males.
- Have a smaller head and nose than males.
- Have a pouch for their young (backward facing).
- Females make softer squeaks, grunts, and screams to communicate.



Female koala at Cleland Wildlife Park photo credit to Koala Keeper

## Did you know?

Male koalas will rub their chests on trees to leave their scent and mark their territory.

Male koalas will start developing their scent gland at around 12-18 months of age.