The koala is native to Australia. Koalas live in eucalyptus forests and woodlands. Wild koalas are found in the eastern states of Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. Koalas are sometimes called ‘koala bears’. They are not bears but are actually marsupials, which means they carry their young in a pouch. A kangaroo is also a marsupial.

A baby koala is called a joey. Joeys are born blind and without ears. They look like pink jellybeans. The female koala carries her baby in her pouch for about six months. The joey drinks only its mother’s milk while in its mother’s pouch. Once strong enough, the young joey rides on its mother’s back or clings to her belly until it is one year old. It only uses the pouch to feed on eucalyptus leaves. At one year old, the joey leaves its mother. The joey is a fully-grown koala by about four years old. Koalas usually live to ten or twelve years of age.

**Appearance**
Koalas have a thick coat of woolly, grey fur with a cream-coloured chest. They have a wide, rounded nose; small yellow eyes and large, fluffy ears. Koalas have sharp claws which they use to help them climb trees. They have five digits (fingers) on each front paw. Two of their digits act like thumbs. This helps them to hold firmly onto the branches and to grip their food. Koalas use their back paws as grooming paws. They communicate with each other by making different noises. The most surprising sounds like a loud snore.

**Diet**
Koalas are herbivores (plant eaters). They eat eucalyptus leaves. An adult koala can eat up to one kilogram of eucalyptus leaves each night. Koalas are fussy eaters and will choose the tastiest leaves from the trees where they live. Koalas do not need to consume much water. Instead, they get most of their moisture from eating eucalyptus leaves.
Eucalyptus leaves are tough and poisonous. An organ called a caecum helps to break down the leaves and keep the koala from being harmed by the poison. Koalas are nocturnal, which means they are awake at night and sleep during the day. Koalas sleep in the branches of trees for up to eighteen hours a day. Koalas need a lot of energy to digest the eucalyptus leaves. Sleeping is the best way to save their energy.

**Endangered**

Koalas are very vulnerable creatures. In Australia, conservation groups want the government to take action to protect the koala. The Australia Koala Foundation estimate that fewer than 80,000 koalas remain in the wild. Experts believe that climate change and deforestation are responsible for the declining number of koalas. Climate change is changing the weather and rising temperature of the Earth. Most scientists agree climate change is caused by human actions, such as burning fossil fuels. Recently, Australia has experienced heatwaves, resulting in little rainfall, which has caused many koalas to die of dehydration. This means they did not have enough water.

Deforestation is where a wide range of trees are cleared or destroyed. Around 80% of koala habitat has already been cleared so human homes can be built. The koala’s natural habitat has also been lost because of drought and forest fires. Drought occurs when there is not enough rainfall. Forest fires are more common when the weather is very hot and dry.

The loss of habitat has left small groups of koalas separated by urban areas and farmland. This makes them more vulnerable. It is estimated that around 4000 koalas are killed each year by dogs and cars alone.
Questions

1. In which country would you find the koala? Tick one.
   - Australia
   - New Zealand
   - South Africa

2. What name are koalas often incorrectly called?

3. Describe the appearance of a koala. Include at least two features of the koala.

4. How do koalas communicate?

5. What is their main source of food?

6. Tick to show if the sentence is true or false.
   Koalas are nocturnal creatures.
   - true
   - false

7. What is deforestation?

8. What did you find most interesting about the koala?
1. In which country would you find the koala? Tick one.

- [ ] Australia
- [ ] New Zealand
- [ ] South Africa

2. What name are koalas often incorrectly called?

*Koalas are often incorrectly called koala bears.*

3. Describe the appearance of a koala. Include at least two features of the koala.

*Accept any description that includes two of the features listed here: Koalas have a thick coat of woolly, grey fur with a cream-coloured chest; They have a wide, rounded nose, small yellow eyes and large, fluffy ears; Koalas have sharp claws which they use to help them climb trees; Koalas have five digits on each front paw and two of them act like thumbs.*

4. How do koalas communicate?

*Koalas communicate with each other by making many different noises.*

5. What is their main source of food?

*Their diet consists mainly of eucalyptus leaves.*

6. Tick to show if the sentence is true or false.

Koalas are nocturnal creatures.

- [x] true
- [ ] false

7. What is deforestation?

*Deforestation is where a wide range of trees are cleared or destroyed.*

8. What did you find most interesting about the koala?

*Pupils’ own responses, such as: I think the most interesting fact about koalas is that they survive by eating a plant that is poisonous.*
Koalas

The koala is native to Australia. They are found in eucalyptus forests and woodlands. Wild koalas are found in the eastern states of Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. Koalas are often incorrectly called ‘koala bears’. They are actually marsupials, which means they carry their young in a pouch. Koalas are closely related to the wombat, possum and kangaroo. A baby koala is called a joey. Joeys are born blind and earless. They resemble a pink jellybean. After giving birth, a female koala carries her baby in her pouch for about six months. The joey drink only its mother’s milk while it grows and develops in its mother’s pouch. Once strong enough, the young joey rides on its mother’s back or clings to her belly for a further six months, only using the pouch to feed. At around one year old, the joey leaves its mother. The joey is a fully-grown koala by about four years old. On average, koalas live to ten or twelve years of age.

Appearance
Koalas have a thick coat of woolly, grey fur with a cream-coloured chest. They have a wide, rounded nose; small yellow eyes and large, fluffy ears. Koalas have sharp claws which they use to help them climb trees. They have five digits (fingers) on each front paw, with two of them acting like thumbs. This helps them to hold firmly onto the branches and to grip their food. Koalas use their back paws as grooming paws. They communicate with each other by making different noises such as clicking, squeaking or grunting. The most surprising is a sound like a loud snore called a bellow.

Diet
Koalas are herbivores (plant eaters). They are one of the only mammals which can survive on a diet of eucalyptus leaves. An adult koala can eat up to one kilogram of eucalyptus leaves each night. Koalas even store snacks of leaves in pouches in their cheeks. Koalas are fussy eaters and will choose the most nutritious and tastiest leaves from the trees where they live. Koalas do not need to consume much water. Instead, they get most of their moisture from eating eucalyptus leaves.
Eucalyptus leaves are tough and poisonous. Luckily, koalas have a long digestive system which allows them to break down the leaves. An organ called a **caecum** helps the koala to break down the leaves and remain unharmed by the poison. Koalas are nocturnal, which means they are awake at night and sleep during the day. Koalas sleep in the branches of trees for up to eighteen hours a day. Koalas need a lot of energy to digest the eucalyptus leaves. Sleeping is the best way to conserve their energy.

**Are Koalas Endangered?**

Koalas are very vulnerable creatures. Experts are now warning that koalas are **functionally extinct** in the wild. In Australia, conservation groups want the government to take action to protect the koala. The Australia Koala Foundation estimate that fewer than 80,000 koalas remain in the wild.

**Did You Know...?**

Functionally extinct means that the koala’s population is so low that it will not be able to produce another generation.

Experts state that two main factors are responsible for the declining number of koalas in the wild: climate change and deforestation. Climate change is changing the weather and rising temperature of the Earth. Most scientists agree climate change is caused by human actions, such as burning fossil fuels. Recently, Australia has experienced heatwaves, resulting in little rainfall. This has caused many koalas to die of **dehydration**. This means they did not have enough water.

Deforestation is where a wide range of trees are cleared or destroyed. The eucalyptus forests and woodlands of Australia’s east coast are disappearing quickly.
Around 80% of koala habitat has already been cleared for construction of human homes. Conservation groups are seeking new laws to protect what is left of the koala’s natural habitat.

Drought and forest fires have also resulted in the loss of the koala’s natural habitat. Drought occurs when there is not enough rainfall. Forest fires are more common when the weather is very hot and dry. The loss of habitat has resulted in the koala population being scattered and separated by urban areas and farmland. It is estimated that as a result of the loss of their habitat, around 4000 koalas are killed each year by dogs and cars alone.
Questions

1. In which country would you find the koala?

2. What is a marsupial? What other animals are also marsupials?

3. Use the text to fill in the missing words.
   Joeys are born _______ and _______. They resemble a pink ________.

4. How long does a joey remain in its mother’s pouch? Tick one.
   - six months
   - one year
   - six years

5. Describe the appearance of a koala.

6. Koalas have five digits on each paw. Two of the digits act like thumbs. What do these help them with?

7. What is a herbivore?

8. Why do koalas not consume much water?

9. What are the two main factors which cause the loss of eucalyptus forest and woodlands?
Answers

1. In which country would you find the koala?

Koalas are native to Australia.

2. What is a marsupial? What other animals are also marsupials?

A marsupial is a mammal which carries its young in a pouch. Other marsupials include the wombat, possum and kangaroo.

3. Use the text to fill in the missing words.

Joeys are born blind and earless. They resemble a pink jellybean.

4. How long does a joey remain in its mother’s pouch? Tick one.

- [ ] six months
- [ ] one year
- [ ] six years

5. Describe the appearance of a koala.

Koalas have a thick coat of woolly, grey fur with a cream-coloured chest. They have a wide, rounded nose; small yellow eyes and large, fluffy ears. Koalas have sharp claws which they use to help them climb trees. They have five digits on each front paw, with two of them acting like thumbs.

6. Koalas have five digits on each paw. Two of the digits act like thumbs. What do these help them with?

I think these two digits help the koala to hold firmly onto the branches and to grip their food.

7. What is a herbivore?

A herbivore is an animal which only eats plants.

8. Why do koalas not consume much water?

Koalas do not consume much water because they get most of their moisture from eating eucalyptus leaves.

9. What are the two main factors which cause the loss of eucalyptus forest and woodlands?

Climate change and deforestation are the main two factors which are causing the loss of eucalyptus forest and woodlands.
The koala is native to Australia and are tree-dwelling creatures found in eucalyptus forests and woodlands. The eastern states of Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia are the only states where koalas are found naturally in the wild. The koala’s appearance has led to it often incorrectly called a ‘koala bear.’ They are actually marsupials and are closely related to the wombat, possum and kangaroo. A marsupial is a mammal which carries its young in a pouch. Young female koalas give birth to a single baby around once a year. A baby koala is called a joey. Joeys are born blind and earless, resembling a pink jellybean. After giving birth, a female koala carries her baby in her pouch for about six months. The joey drink only its mother’s milk while it grows and develops in its mother’s pouch. Once strong enough, the young joey rides on its mother’s back or clings to her belly for a further six months, only using the pouch to feed on eucalyptus leaves. At around one year old, the joey leaves its mother. The joey is a fully-grown koala by about four years old. On average, koalas live to ten or twelve years of age.

Did You Know...?
The word marsupial comes from the Latin word marsupium, meaning pouch.

Appearance
Koalas have a thick coat of woolly, grey fur with a cream-coloured chest. Their fur helps protect them from extremes of high and low temperatures. They have a wide, rounded nose; small yellow eyes and large, fluffy ears. Koalas have sharp claws which they use to help them climb trees. They have five digits (fingers) on each front paw, with two of them acting like thumbs. This helps them to hold firmly onto the branches and to grip their food. Koalas use their back paws as grooming paws. They also communicate with each other by making a range of noises such as clicking, squeaking, grunting or murmuring sounds. The most surprising is a sound like a loud snore called a bellow. An adult male koala has a dark scent gland in the centre of his white chest. The male koala uses this scent glad to mark its territory.
Diet
Koalas are located in eastern Australia where eucalyptus trees are most plentiful. Koalas are one of the only herbivores (plant eaters) that can survive on a diet of eucalyptus leaves. An adult koala can eat up to one kilogram of eucalyptus leaves each night. Koalas even store snacks of leaves in pouches in their cheeks. Koalas are fussy eaters and will choose the most nutritious and tastiest leaves from the trees where they live. They do not consume much water; they get most of their moisture from eating eucalyptus leaves. They drink water if necessary, such as in times of drought.

Eucalyptus leaves are tough and poisonous. Fortunately, koalas have a special digestive system which allows them to break down the tough leaves. An organ called a caecum is important in helping to break down the leaves and ensuring the poison does not harm the animal. Koalas are mostly nocturnal, which means they are awake at night and sleep during the day. Koalas sleep in the branches of trees for up to eighteen hours a day. Koalas sleep a lot during the day because they require a lot of energy to digest the toxic, low-nutrition diet that they eat. Sleeping is the most effective way to conserve their energy.

Are Koalas Endangered?
While koalas are not classified as an endangered species, they are recognised as being extremely vulnerable. Experts are now warning that koalas are functionally extinct in the wild. In Australia, conservation groups want the government to take action to protect the koala. The Australia Koala Foundation estimate that fewer than 80,000 koalas remain in the wild.

Did You Know...?
Functionally extinct means that the koala’s population is so low that it will not be able to produce another generation.

In the 1920s and 1930s, koalas were widely hunted and killed for their fur, causing their population to decline from several million to a few hundred thousand.
The koala’s population continues to plummet and experts have concluded that there are two main factors are responsible for the recent decline in the number of koalas in the wild: climate change and deforestation.

Climate change is changing the weather and rising temperature of the Earth. Most scientists conclude it’s caused by human actions, such as burning fossil fuels. Recently, Australia has experienced heatwaves, resulting in little rainfall. This has caused many koalas to die of dehydration. This means they did not have enough water.

Deforestation is where a wide range of trees are cleared or destroyed. The eucalyptus forests and woodlands of Australia’s east coast are disappearing quickly. Habitat loss is the greatest threat to koalas. As tree-dwelling creatures who require lots of space, scientists warn that deforestation has a devastating effect on koalas. Sadly, around 80% of koala habitat has already been cleared for the construction of human homes. Conservation groups are seeking new laws to protect what is left of the koala’s natural habitat.

Drought and forest fires has also resulted in the loss of the koala’s natural habitat. Drought occurs when there is not enough rainfall. Forest fires are more common when the weather is very hot and dry. The loss of habitat has resulted in the koala population being scattered and separated by urban areas and farmlands, making them more vulnerable. It is estimated that as a result of the loss of their habitat, around 4,000 koalas are killed each year by dogs and cars alone.
1. Which Australian states are koalas found naturally in the wild?

2. What is a marsupial? What other animals are marsupials?

3. What does a joey consume during its first six months?

4. How long does a joey remain in its mother's pouch?

5. How do koalas remained unharmed by poisonous eucalyptus leaves?

6. Why do koalas spend up to eighteen hours a day sleeping?

7. What is meant by *functionally extinct*?

8. What caused the decline in the number of koalas in the 1920s and 1930s?
9. Why is deforestation a threat to koalas?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

10. What did you find most interesting about the koala?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
Answers

1. Which Australian states are koalas found naturally in the wild?

   The eastern states of Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia are the only states where Koalas are found naturally in the wild.

2. What is a marsupial? What other animals are marsupials?

   A marsupial is a mammal which carries its young in a pouch. Other marsupials include the wombat, possum and kangaroo.

3. What does a joey consume during its first six months?

   A joey drinks only its mother’s milk while it grows and develops in its mother’s pouch.

4. How long does a joey remain in its mother’s pouch?

   Koalas have a thick coat of woolly, grey fur with a cream-coloured chest. They have a wide, rounded nose; small yellow eyes and large, fluffy ears. Koalas have sharp claws which they use to help them climb trees. They have five digits on each front paw, with two of them acting like thumbs. An adult male koala has a dark scent gland in the centre of his white chest.

5. How do koalas remained unharmed by poisonous eucalyptus leaves?

   Koalas have a special digestive system which allows them to break down the tough leaves. An organ called a caecum is important in helping to break down the leaves and keeping them unharmed by the poison.

6. Why do koalas spend up to eighteen hours a day sleeping?

   Koalas sleep a lot during the day because they require a lot of energy to digest the toxic, low-nutrition diet that they eat. Sleeping is the most effective way to conserve their energy.

7. What is meant by functionally extinct?

   Functionally extinct means that the koala population is so low that it will not be able to produce another generation.

8. What caused the decline in the number of koalas in the 1920s and 1930s?

   In the 1920s and 1930s, koalas were widely hunted and killed for their fur, causing their population declined from several million to a few hundred thousand.
9. Why is deforestation a threat to koalas?

Deforestation is where a wide range of trees are cleared or destroyed. As tree-dwelling creatures who require lots of space, habitat loss is the greatest threat to koalas.

10. What did you find most interesting about the koala?

Pupils’ own responses, such as: I think the most interesting fact about koalas is that they are born blind and without ears, as this is very different to how human young are born.