



#8793

## KOALAS

Grade Levels: 5-10

26 minutes

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### DESCRIPTION

The Australian Koala Foundation works diligently to educate authorities about the probable destruction of this familiar animal. Closeup photography reveals its habitat, social structure, characteristics, mating habits, and interaction. Compromises between the needs of people and the eucalyptus habitat needs of the koalas mean hope for its future.

### ACADEMIC STANDARDS

#### Subject Area: Life Sciences

- ◆ Standard: Understands relationships among organisms and their physical environment
  - Benchmark: Knows that all individuals of a species that exist together at a given place and time make up a population, and all populations living together and the physical factors with which they interact compose an ecosystem
  - Benchmark: Knows ways in which humans can alter the equilibrium of ecosystems, causing potentially irreversible effects

### INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To study the life of a koala.
2. To know the koala social hierarchy and behavior.
3. To realize that the koala population is diminishing.
4. To observe the effects of human population growth on an ecosystem.

### BEFORE SHOWING

1. Where do koalas live?
2. Research the history of the koala as an Australian icon. How did it come to be a symbol of that country?



*Phascolarctos cinereus*

## AFTER SHOWING

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### Discussion Items and Questions

1. There is already legislation in place to protect koalas, so why is their continued existence threatened?
2. Given what you know about koala society, describe what developers and housing development residents can do to protect koalas.
3. Should economic development take the needs of koalas into account?
4. Name three ways in which the koala has evolved perfectly for its environment.

### SUMMARY

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Over a span of 40 million years, the koala has developed into a highly specialized, unique creature perfectly adapted to its environment, but its environment is disappearing.

Australians once slaughtered koalas with enthusiasm. During the 1920s alone, three million were killed for their fur. Today their direct destruction is no longer socially acceptable, but they continue to fall victim to habitat loss and the stresses of contemporary life. As the Australian economy grows, the eucalyptus forests where these fascinating creatures live fall victim to bulldozers and other forms of destruction, leaving hungry and stressed koalas to find new homes. Many will not survive.

With his painstaking research, Steve Phillips has revolutionized our understanding of individual koala behavior and koala society. Using radio collars and careful observation, he has unlocked the secrets of the koala social hierarchy and learned much about their behavior. "The tragedy for us is that we're only beginning to understand the complexities of these animals, and understanding them is fundamental to their conservation."

In this episode, we see Phillips and Australian Koala Federation head Deborah Tabart in action: they successfully negotiate with the developer of a new housing estate to make koala-saving changes to his original plans. It's this kind of cooperation between the koala champions and the people driving economic growth that will be essential if the koala is to flourish.

### RELATED RESOURCES

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**Captioned Media Program**

- Australia: Canberra & Sydney #7689



## World Wide Web



The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and “kid-safe” sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **AUSTRALIAN KOALA FOUNDATION**

<http://www.akfkoala.gil.com.au/>

See a photo gallery, foster a koala and read the latest technology used to save the koala.

- **LONE PINE KOALA SANCTUARY**

<http://www.koala.net/>

Visit the Lone Pine Sanctuary to see their dedication to preserve Australian wildlife.

- **KOALA**

<http://www.kidsplanet.org/factsheets/koala.html>

Gives information about the koala, such as its description, size, population, life span, and other characteristics.

