Name _____

Koalas: The Tree-Hugging Marsupials

Have you ever heard of a koala? These fuzzy, tree-dwelling animals are native to Australia. They are often called "koala bears," but koalas are not bears at all! They are marsupials, which means they carry their babies in a pouch, just like kangaroos and wombats.

Koalas have thick, gray fur and large, round ears. Their black, button-like noses make them look quite cute. They spend most of their time in eucalyptus trees. Koalas eat the leaves from these trees, which are tough and hard to digest for most animals. However, koalas have a special stomach that helps break down the tough leaves. They can eat up to two pounds of eucalyptus leaves every day!

One of the most interesting things about koalas is their sleeping habits. Koalas sleep for about 18 to 22 hours a day! This is because eucalyptus leaves don't give them much energy, so they need to rest often. When they are awake, they spend time climbing trees, eating, or grooming their fur.

Koalas are solitary animals, which means they usually live alone. Each koala has its own home area called a "range." Males can be very protective of their range and may use loud bellows to warn other koalas to stay away.

Baby koalas are called joeys. A joey is born tiny and hairless, about the size of a jellybean. It stays in its mother's pouch for about six months, drinking milk and growing bigger. Once the joey is strong enough, it will ride on its mother's back before learning to climb trees on its own.

Sadly, koalas are at risk due to habitat loss and diseases. As forests are cleared for buildings and farms, koalas lose their homes. Conservation groups work hard to protect these amazing animals so they can continue living safely in the wild.

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