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## National Geographic Readers: Koalas

By: Laura Marsh

Explore where koalas live, what they eat, and even the way they say "hello."

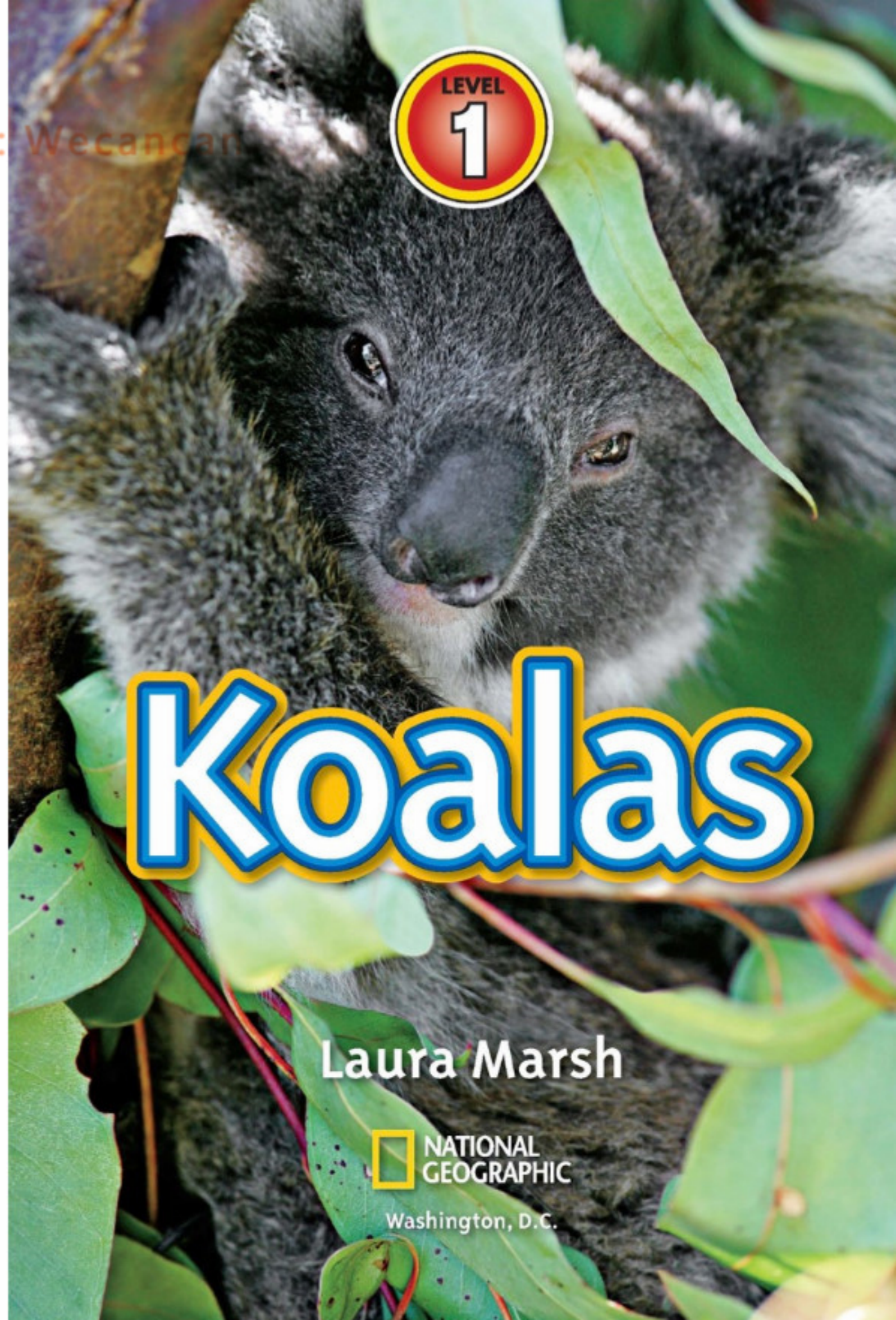
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# Koalas

Laura Marsh



Washington, D.C.



# Who Am I?

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I live in the trees, eating green leaves.

I have a black nose and long claws on my toes.

My big ears are furry. And I'm not in a hurry.

Who am I?

**A koala!**



# Where Koalas Live



Koalas live in a country called Australia (aw-STRALE-YUH). They live in forests and wooded areas. They live in the mountains and on the coast.

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Q

Why did the koala sit on the clock?

Because it wanted to be on time.

A



# Pouch Animals

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Koalas look a little like teddy bears. But they are not bears at all.

Koalas are mammals called marsupials (mar-SOOP-ee-uhls). They carry their babies in pouches. Kangaroos and wombats are marsupials, too.



## Tree Talk

**MAMMAL:** An animal that feeds its babies milk. It has a backbone and is warm-blooded.

**MARSUPIAL:** A mammal that carries its babies in a pouch

kangaroos

# Built to Climb

A koala's body is perfect for living in trees.



## Wecan



Its body curls up to fit between branches.

Fur on its bottom is extra thick. It is a built-in seat cushion!

Long arms wrap around trees.

Strong legs help a koala climb up and down trees.

Paws have pads that keep a koala from slipping.

Long claws dig into tree trunks and branches.

Front paws have two thumbs and three fingers. These help grab branches.

# Life in the Trees

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Koalas are good climbers.

They spend most of their time in trees. This is their habitat.

Koalas sleep in trees, too.

They doze off in some funny places.

Could you sleep like this?



Koalas are slow and sleepy. They sleep up to 18 hours a day.



## Tree Talk

HABITAT:  
An animal's  
natural home

A koala lives in a small area in its habitat. The area has about 100 trees. This is its territory.

Male koalas have a scent patch on their chests. They rub it on the trees.

This tells other koalas to stay out of their territory.

scent patch



### Tree Talk

**TERRITORY:** An area where an animal or group of animals eats, travels, and lives

# Picky Eaters

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Q

What's a koala's favorite drink?

Coca Koala!

A



Koalas eat lots of eucalyptus (yoo-ka-LIP-tus) leaves. But they only eat from a few kinds of eucalyptus trees.

To get enough food, koalas eat for about five hours every day. Koalas mostly eat and sleep.





# 6 Cool Koala Facts

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1

Koalas can jump from tree to tree.



2

Koalas hardly drink any water. They get most of their water from leaves.



3

A koala's fur protects the animal from the heat, cold, and rain.



4

Koalas are very active at night. They like midnight snacks!



5

Koalas have fingerprints, just like we do.



6

Eucalyptus leaves smell like cough drops. Koalas do, too!

# Baby Koalas

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A baby koala is called a joey.  
When it's born, it does not have any hair. It is also blind.

The joey stays in its mother's pouch for about six months. It drinks milk and grows bigger and bigger.

A joey is the size of a jelly bean at birth.



ACTUAL SIZE!



A joey peeks out of mom's pouch.





Soon the joey comes out of the pouch. It hangs on mom's chest or rides on her back.

The young koala learns how to climb and hang on so it can live safely in the trees.



# In Danger

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Today koalas and people often must share space.

Koalas need land with trees. But people are cutting down trees to make farms, roads, and buildings. There is less land for koalas. They are in danger.

Koalas get hurt, too. They get hit by cars or hurt by pet dogs.

# Helping Koalas

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Luckily for koalas, there are hospitals just for them.

Doctors and nurses help koalas that are sick or hurt. Koala hospitals help thousands of koalas every year.



A koala gets help after it was hit by a car. It will be taken to the Koala Hospital in Port Macquarie, New South Wales, in Australia.



This koala's arms were hurt. The casts help them heal.



Hospital workers give loving care to a sick koala.



This koala is being weighed.

Koalas get help in other ways, too. Road signs tell drivers to watch out for koalas.



**NEXT  
10 km**



Q

Why did the koala cross the road?

A Because it was the chicken's day off.

A

A koala uses a tunnel that goes under a road.

Tunnels and bridges can help koalas cross roads. But koalas don't always know where the safe places to cross are.

Saving eucalyptus trees is the best way to help koalas. Trees are homes for koalas.

# What in the World?

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## WORD BANK

leaves claws pouch trees joey ears

These pictures show close-up views of things in a koala's world. Use the hints below to figure out what's in the pictures. Answers on page 31.



HINT: A marsupial carries her baby in here.



HINT: You have two of these, but they are not furry.



HINT: This is a koala's favorite food.



HINT: These help a koala climb.



HINT: It lives in a pouch after its birth.



HINT: A koala spends almost all of its time here.

Answers: 1. pouch, 2. ears, 3. leaves, 4. claws, 5. joey, 6. trees



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**HABITAT:** An animal's natural home



**MAMMAL:** An animal that feeds its babies milk. It has a backbone and is warm-blooded.



**MARSUPIAL:** A mammal that carries its babies in a pouch



**TERRITORY:** An area where an animal or group of animals eats, travels, and lives