

# Endangered Species of the World

## Featured Animal: the Koala

by Becky Le

Koalas aren't endangered, or are they? Deforestation, disease, and dogs kill the koala population, but the subject of whether koalas are



truly endangered is still being debated among officials and environmentalists. But I'll let you decide!

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pment and deforestation in Australia have destroyed the koalas' natural habitat and its food source. The furry little teddy bears (it's not a bear at all—did you know that?) are naturally vegans, eating only the leaves of the eucalyptus tree. Because they only eat this particular leaf, they live and rest in the tree, which explains why we usually see koalas on trees. Unfortunately, people are unaware of this and cut down the forests for logging and to make room for agriculture. Bush fires

also destroy the koalas' natural habitat, and many are started **deliberately** by inconsiderate dolts who know nothing about endangered animals! Koalas' habitats are also being crossed with roads, so "road kills" are quite frequent. Because people build developments near koala habitats, pet dogs attack the poor little fur balls too (shame on you!).

Diseases are also causing the endangerment of the koala bear. A strong venereal illness has threatened the koala's reproductive system. Babies are sometimes born dead, misshapen, or only live for a few minutes. Scientists yearn for a cure for this pesky disease and have tried to find and isolate healthy koalas so they won't catch this sickness.

Koalas have few deadly natural enemies. Occasionally, Goannas (large lizards), eagles, and owls will catch a koala. Koalas' main enemies, however, are dingoes and humans. Humans once even killed koalas for their

gray-white fur. Now it's illegal to kill the furry creature.

Technically, koalas aren't yet classified as endangered; the Red List of Threatened Species considers it only a "lower risk/ near-threatened" animal, even though the population of the furry little creature has dropped by 90% in the last decade! And we call it not endangered!

Koalas are precious little animals that must be protected. We're not Romans, who wiped out certain species for entertainment; we're a bit more considerate, aren't we? It would be a huge shame if we killed all of the koalas in the world and were forced to gaze at it only in pictures, wouldn't it?

Do the koalas a favor—foster a koala by joining the Australian Koala Foundation, which helps the little animal. Log onto [www.savethekoala.com](http://www.savethekoala.com) for more information. You can help save a koala and another species from extinction!

### Koala Story Sources:

<http://encarta.msn.com/encnet/refpages/RefArticle.aspx?>  
<http://www.koala-support.de/akf/welcome.html>  
<http://members.tripod.com/adm/popup/roadmap.shtml?member>  
<http://www.savethekoala.com/savethekoaladay.html>  
<http://www.worldwildlife.org/species/speciessection.cfm>



## ***On the Lighter Side...***

**Teacher:** What family does the octopus belong to?

**Pupil:** Nobody I know!

**Teacher:** What is farther away, Australia or the Moon?

**Pupil:** Australia—you can see the Moon at night!

**First man:** My girlfriend eats like a bird.

**Second man:** You mean she hardly eats a thing?

**First man:** No, I mean she eats slugs and worms!

*submitted by Paul Soud*