

Kangaroos groom each other.

Kangaroos will groom each other. They comb their fur to take out bugs, dirt or small sticks.

They use their smaller front feet. They also use a special toe on their back feet, which is used like a comb.

Kangaroos cannot go backwards.

Because of the way their feet and knees are faced, kangaroos cannot jump backwards. If a roo wants to go the other way, he has to turn around first.

Kangaroos can swim.

They like to swim in the water, and even in the ocean!



KANGAROOS



AUSTRALIAN HOPPERS

By Sharon Greenaway



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Did you know that kangaroos growl?

A few years ago there was a flyer living near our home. She had been raised by some neighbours and then let go free. So she was not afraid of us.

One day she was grazing on grass near our home. I went up to her, hoping that I might be able to pet her. When I got too close, she turned her head toward me and growled. I took this to mean that I was not to get any closer. I didn't!

I learned then that it is best to keep a safe distance from any kangaroo. If the kangaroo feels you are a threat it may attack you.

Males give a warning noise that sounds like a sneeze?

My family and I have heard this strange sound. The wild kangaroos that live near us sound like this when we get too close to them.



Funky Facts

Older roos teach the younger ones of the mob.

The bigger kangaroos can jump over most farm fencing, but the younger ones are often too small to do this. Joeys may be caught in the wire as they try to hop over the fences.

Roos will also crawl under fences. They push the wire out of shape or off the fence posts.

Sometimes it might be a larger kangaroo that does this damage when it is teaching a joey.

One day I watched a joey trying to follow its mob, but could not hop over the fence. A boomer came up and watched the joey hopping back and forth along the fence. After a couple of minutes the boomer crawled under the fence. The younger kangaroo followed him.



What is a Kangaroo?

The kangaroo is a marsupial. A marsupial is an animal that lives in its mother's pouch after being born.

Kangaroos are often called roos for short.

The kangaroo has two large back feet. It uses these feet to hop or jump about with.

The kangaroo also has two smaller front feet. It uses these feet much like we use our hands and arms. It will hold things in its paws, or even use its paws to hit other animals.

The kangaroo also uses its front feet when it is moving slowly. But a kangaroo does not walk on all fours like other animals do. It will put its front paws on the ground, then jump its back feet up to its front feet. Then it will move its front feet forward again.

Kangaroos have a large tail. They use their tail for balance.

A male kangaroo is called a boomer or a buck. A female kangaroo is called a flyer or a doe. A baby kangaroo is called a joey.



How Do Kangaroos Keep Their Cool?

When the weather is hot, kangaroos will rest under the trees.

They cool down by licking their front legs. There are tiny veins in this area that are close to the skin. By licking these veins, the kangaroo cools its blood.

Sometimes kangaroos will dig into the ground, like a dog. They find cool soil below and lie down in it.



Joeys will play fight only with their mother. Older males will play fight with each other. They are training for the time when they will fight the head kangaroo for his job.

They might also have to fight if an enemy corners the mob. Then the males need to be ready to protect the family. If they can, kangaroos will run away from their enemies.

Kangaroos fight by punching with their hands. They will also jump up and try to kick with their feet.

By two or three years old, the joey has grown up. Then it is old enough to have its own young.

The life span of a kangaroo can vary. Some may only live for six years in the wild. Others can live to about 18 years. In a zoo or wildlife park, kangaroos can live up to 20 years.

Some kangaroos are small. The smallest one is the musky rat kangaroo. It only weighs about half a kilogram.

Some kangaroos can grow up to two meters high and weigh 90 kilograms.

There are at least 69 kinds of kangaroos. Some of these kangaroos are called wallabies.

Kangaroos come in many colours. Most are grey or red or brown or a mix of these. There is even one wallaby that has orange, yellow, white and brown on it.



Where Do Kangaroos Live?

Kangaroos live in Australia and in New Guinea. They live in many different kinds of areas. Some, like the Eastern Grey Kangaroo live in forests and open plains. Rock Wallabies live in rocky areas. Other kangaroos live in rainforest trees.



Once it gets there, it grabs onto a teat by its mouth. For the next three to four months the joey sucks milk almost non-stop. The joey stays here until its skin is covered with fur.

At about four or five months of age the joey will look out from the pouch. This is his first look at the world outside. Slowly it will gain courage and climb outside to explore.

The joey learns how to survive by watching its mother and other kangaroos. When there is danger or if the joey is hungry or tired, it will climb back into the pouch. It does this until it is about ten months of age. By this time the mother may have another younger joey growing in her pouch.





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How Are Babies Born and Raised?

The young kangaroo is tiny when it is born. It is only about two and half centimetres long.

As soon as it is born, it must climb up into its mother's pouch. It takes the joey a long time to claw its way up her fur and into her pouch.



What, How and When Do Kangaroos Eat?

Kangaroos eat grass, leaves, seeds and twigs. The musky rat kangaroo also eats insects.

Have you ever seen a cow chew its cud? Kangaroos do the same thing. A lot of the grass that the kangaroo eats is tough and needs extra chewing. So the kangaroo brings up the food it first swallowed and chews it again.

Do Kangaroos Live Alone?

Some kangaroos live on their own. Others live in groups called mobs.

These mobs can be small with only one male and two or three does with their joeys. Some mobs are much larger. They can have as many as thirty kangaroos in them.

In all mobs there is one big male kangaroo. He is the father to many of the joeys. All the other males are smaller than this boomer.

European settlers came to Australia just over two hundred years ago. Since then they have killed kangaroos for meat.

They have also killed a lot of kangaroos because they thought there were too many of them. They were getting in the way of the people.

But the biggest danger to all these animals is the loss of habitat. That means that there are fewer and fewer places that kangaroos like to live in. That is because people keep moving into these places to build houses.

Sometimes people even find roos living in their back yard!



Kangaroos get a lot of water from the leaves they eat, but they also need to drink water. That's why they stay close to water like a lake or a dam.

In the cooler months, kangaroos will eat during the day. In the hot summer months, they like to rest in the day. When it gets cooler in the evening, roos will move around to eat.

This can be a problem when people are driving their cars. Kangaroos hop onto the road. They don't seem to know the danger they are in. There are many kangaroos hit by cars every year.



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Who Are Its Enemies?

Eagles and wild dogs will kill small or sick kangaroos. Foxes, cats and dogs also kill small or sick kangaroos.

Australian aborigines were the first people to live in Australia. They have hunted kangaroos since they came to Australia thousands of years ago. They like to eat kangaroo meat. They use the skin and the fur for clothes and tools.