

# Mammals: Marsupials in Australia

## 1. What exactly are marsupials<sup>1</sup>?

Marsupials are animals that carry their new-born babies in a pouch<sup>2</sup>. The babies are tiny when they are born. They have no hair so the mother's pouch is the warmest place for them. When they no longer need their mother's milk and can look after themselves, they can leave the pouch.



tree kangaroo

## 2. Where do you find marsupials?

They are mostly found in the Americas, Australia, New Guinea and some neighbouring islands. There are about 260 different types of marsupials in the world today.



possum

## 3. What is their natural habitat<sup>3</sup>?

They live in forests, plains<sup>4</sup> and deserts.

## 4. What are the most common<sup>5</sup> marsupials in Australia?

Kangaroos, koalas and wombats<sup>6</sup> are the best known marsupials. There are also wallabies<sup>7</sup> and possums<sup>8</sup>.



wombat

## 5. What are wallabies?

They are small kangaroos.

## 6. Why does the Australian coat of arms<sup>9</sup> have a kangaroo on it?

This animal was chosen as a symbol of Australia because it is a native animal. But the kangaroo is also seen as a symbol of 'moving forward' because it doesn't usually move backwards. The kangaroo on the Australian coat of arms is the Red Kangaroo. This is the biggest marsupial in the world. It can hop at up to 40 miles per hour and can jump up to ten feet high.



Find out more about marsupials. You can choose one of the marsupials above and look for more information on the Internet, for example. Present your results to the rest of the class.

<sup>1</sup>marsupial [ma:'su:piəl] Beuteltier • <sup>2</sup>pouch [paʊtʃ] Beutel • <sup>3</sup>habitat ['hæbitæt] Lebensraum • <sup>4</sup>plain [pleɪn] Ebene

<sup>5</sup>common ['kɒmən] weit verbreitet • <sup>6</sup>wombat ['wɒmbæt] Wombat (Beuteltier) • <sup>7</sup>wallaby ['wɒləbi] Wallaby (Beuteltier)

<sup>8</sup>possum ['pɒsəm] Possum (Beuteltier) • <sup>9</sup>coat of arms [ˌkəʊt\_əv\_ˈɑ:mz] Wappen