

Mammals: Marsupials in Australia

FAQs

1. What exactly are marsupials?
Marsupials [mɑ:'su:piəl] are animals that carry their new-born babies in a pouch. 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?
They live in forests, plains and deserts.

4. What are the most common marsupials in Australia?
Kangaroos, koalas and wombats are the best known marsupials. There are also wallabies, possums and bandicoots.



wombat

5. What are wallabies?
They are small kangaroos.

6. What about the Tasmanian tiger?
It is now extinct. It was a marsupial. It didn't belong to the tiger family but it got its name because it had stripes like a tiger.

7. Why does the Australian coat of arms have a kangaroo on it?
This animal was chosen as a symbol of 'moving forward'. Like the emu, which is also on the coat of arms, kangaroos are unusual: They can only move forwards. They cannot go backwards at all! The kangaroo on the Australian coat of arms is the Red Kangaroo. This is the biggest marsupial in the world. It can hop up to 40 miles per hour and can jump up to ten feet high.

