

Finch & C^o



**AN UNUSUALLY MOUNTED AUSTRALIAN KOALA SKULL AND LOWER JAW BONE . LABELLED 'PHASCOLARCTOS CINEREUS .
NEW HOLLAND 1876' AND 'KOALA'**

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LITERATURE

MARSUPIALS INHABIT A HUGE RANGE OF HABITATS FROM DESERT TO RAINFOREST . UNLIKE PLACENTAL MAMMALS THEY GIVE BIRTH AT A VERY EARLY STAGE OF THE EMBRYO'S DEVELOPMENT AND NOURISH THE BABY BY MILK FROM NIPPLES PROTECTED BY AND HIDDEN IN A POUCH .

KOALA'S ARE MARSUPIALS AND ONE OF THE FEW MAMMALS CAPABLE OF DIGESTING THE AROMATIC AND PUNGENT OIL FILLED LEAVES OF THE NATIVE AUSTRALIAN EUCALYPTUS . KOALA IS AN ABORIGINAL WORD MEANING 'IT DOES NOT DRINK' AS IT DERIVES SUFFICIENT MOISTURE FROM IT'S GUM LEAF DIET AND DEW . THEY SPEND NEARLY ALL THEIR LIVES IN THE TREES EATING AROUND 500 GRAMS OF LEAVES FOR AROUND FOUR HOURS A NIGHT AND DOZING FOR THE REMAINING TWENTY WEDGED SECURELY IN A BRANCH FORK . OCCASIONALLY THEY DESCEND TO CHANGE TREES OR PROMOTE DIGESTION BY EATING SOIL , BARK AND GRAVEL .

WITH THEIR LARGE WIDE BEAR LIKE FACE AND SMOOTH BLACK MUZZLE SET IN SOFT LONG GREY FUR THEY HAVE A DECEPTIVELY PLACID APPEARANCE . THEY HAVE SHORT POWERFUL LIMBS WITH SHARP CLAWS THAT ARE READILY USED TO BITE AND SCRATCH AS WELL AS TO GRIP ONTO THE LIMBS OF TREES .

KOALAS HAVE FEW NATURAL PREDATORS APART FROM LARGE BIRDS OF PREY . ASIDE FROM MAN , IT IS LAND CLEARANCE FOR FARMING , FORESTRY AND BUILDING THAT POSES THE MOST CONSIDERABLE THREAT TO THEIR CONTINUED WILD EXISTENCE . IT WAS FIRST REPORTED AS BEING SEEN IN THE BLUE MOUNTAINS WEST OF SYDNEY IN 1789 AS A KIND OF SLOTH OR MONKEY . BY 1908 IT WAS SLAUGHTERED TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT 57,933 PELTS PASSED THROUGH THE SYDNEY FUR MARKET ALONE . BY 1924 OVER TWO MILLION PELTS WERE EXPORTED FROM THE EASTERN STATES . THEY ARE NOW REDUCED TO EXTINCTION IN SOME PARTS OF AUSTRALIA .