



Marvelous
MAMMALS
from
DOWN UNDER
by
Heather Horn



THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL LIBRARY



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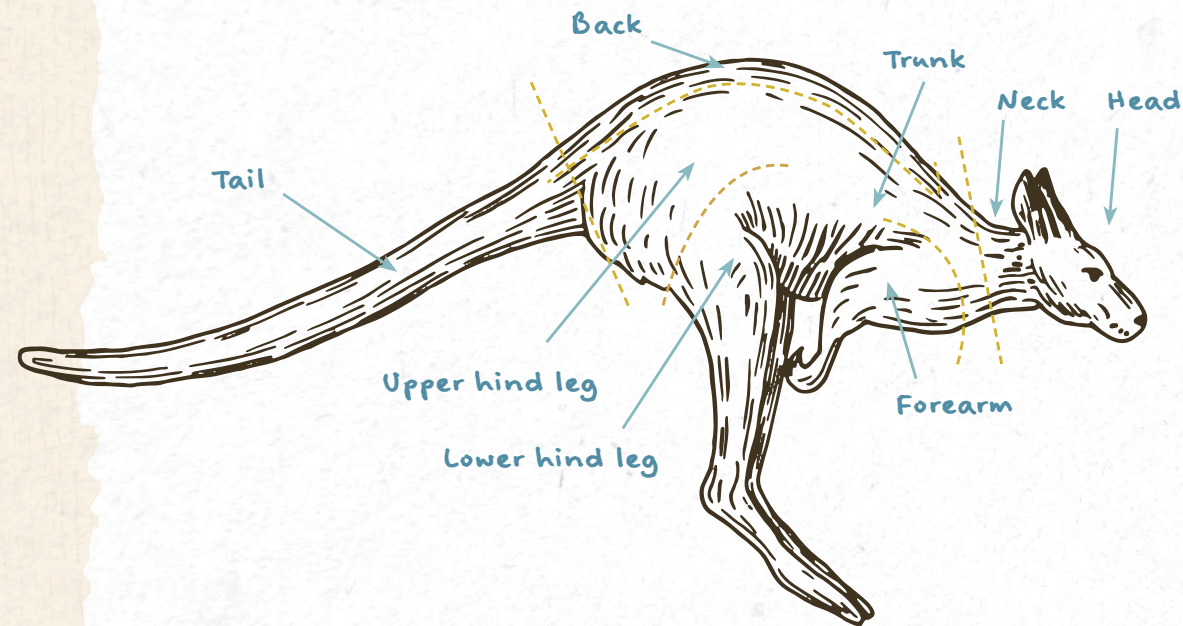


KANGAROOS

First, I'd like to introduce you to the eastern gray kangaroo. Did you know there are more kangaroos than people in Australia? Of the four large species of kangaroos, the eastern gray kangaroos are the most numerous. There are several million eastern grays that call eastern Australia home, so you are highly likely to see one on your journey through the outback.



Anatomy of a Kangaroo



Kangaroos do not walk like other animals. Their hind legs and feet move together when they jump. In fact, they cannot move their legs one at a time on land at all because their feet are so long, which is where their tails can help. Zoologists have studied how kangaroos use their tails, and they have learned that the tail is used to help push the kangaroo forward when jumping. In a way, it is like the kangaroo has a third leg.



At one year old, she will leave her mother, and her mother will have another baby. She will be on her own to find food and protect herself, making her home alone in the trees. Spending many hours sleeping, between 18–20 each day, koalas miss most of the daytime. They need this large amount of rest for their bodies to break down their diet of toxic eucalypt.

Have you ever looked closely at a koala's paws? They are very interesting! The hind paws are five-fingered and shaped similarly to a primate paw, but the second and third digits are stuck together to help with grooming, and the "thumb" lacks a sharp claw.



In what ways are the koala's paws like your hands? What is the most noticeable difference?



hind paw



front paw

A simple line drawing of a branch with several leaves, located in the top right corner of the page.

The front paws also have sharp claws for climbing trees, but the fingers are split differently. Look at your hand. You have four fingers and one thumb that points away from the rest. Koalas have what looks like three fingers and two thumbs to help them cling to and climb trees—useful tools when you call the trees your home.



Another interesting fact about the opossum is that the mother's pouch opening is not placed upwards like other marsupials. It is more of a vertical opening toward the tail end of the mother, like another mammal, the Australian wombat, whose pouch opening faces her tail.

Mother platypuses hide away in burrows, so it took a long time for scientists to learn that they lay eggs. The mother carries the eggs inside her body for three weeks before laying her eggs. She then incubates them by lying on them to keep them warm for another week before they hatch. Once hatched, the baby platypuses crawl over to their mother to start drinking milk.



GOD'S WONDERFUL DESIGN



1

Echidna



2

Kangaroo



3

Koala



4*

Opossum

*Found in North America



5

Platypus



6

Possum



7

Tasmanian devil



8

Wallaby



9

Wallaroo



10

Wombat

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Come on a wild adventure through a continent filled with mammals unlike any other! Experience Australian mammals of the outback and coast, as well as their environments, in an interactive way. Look closely at the photographs and illustrations as you read about each unique species. What can you discover about the unusual mammals of the beautiful continent of Australia?

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