

Animals of the World: Marsupials



THE KANGAROO



Kangaroos are the most recognized animal from Oceania, and more specifically, from Australia. Kangaroos are marsupials, mammals that carry their newborn babies in a bag located in the abdomen.

There are several species of kangaroo, but the best known are the gray kangaroo, western kangaroo, eastern kangaroo, and red kangaroo. Sizes vary from one species to another, ranging from 1 meter to almost 2 meters, when standing upright, and weighing anywhere from 10 to 90 kilos. Male kangaroos are larger in size and weight than females.



Despite looking like slow animals, they are extremely agile and fast. Their muscular back legs are very useful when it needs to jump and move.

Some studies say kangaroos have 5 legs, including its long tail along with the 4 other legs.



Certain species of kangaroo can reach speeds of 70 km/h over short distances, which is almost as fast as most cars today.

Kangaroos, usually, feed at night. They are herbivorous animals, primarily eating herbs, grasses, shrubs, and some roots. Their teeth are adapted to be able to cut, tear, crush, and crumble what they eat. Being nocturnal animals, they rest during the day and are active at night.

The gestation period of kangaroos within the womb between 21 and 38 days, which is one of shortest in the animal kingdom.



Kangaroos do not have many predators, so they have a life expectancy of about 18 years, depending on the species. However, there are frequent reports of kangaroos being hit by cars and killed on some Australian roads. Traffic signals have been added to sections of those roads alerting drivers that this part of the road is an area where kangaroos try to cross the road, and that they need to slow down and watch carefully.

Kangaroos are animals that live in groups, called mobs. There are about 10 kangaroos in the mob and is always led by a male.

Depending on the species, they reproduce throughout the year, but typically in spring or summer. Normally, only one baby is born in each pregnancy, although there are a few documented cases of twins.

The female kangaroo has a marsupial bag in the abdominal area where she can breastfeed, care for, and transport her young until it is able to do it on its own.



Kangaroos have been important animals for the Australian aborigines, because they used its meat for food and the soft skin for clothing. Even today, they still consume kangaroo meat, which is juicy, has a high protein content, and is low in fat.

Some ranchers and farmers in Australia complain about kangaroos because they eat their pastures and destroy their crops. Despite this, kangaroos are well-known and loved throughout the world.

Name _____

Date _____

THE KANGAROO

Answer the questions.

1. Kangaroos are animals that _____

- a. are the most recognized from Oceania.
- b. are sociable.
- c. are aggressive towards humans.
- d. have hard skin and tasty meat.



2. Kangaroos are slow animals _____

- a. when they get ready to hunt.
- b. if they go in a large group.
- c. when predators stalk them.
- d. None are correct.



3. Being animals that move by jumping, kangaroos _____

- a. have four legs.
- b. have five legs.
- c. have four legs and the tail, which they use to propel themselves.
- d. have two legs and the tail, which they use to propel themselves.

4. Why are there warning signs on the roads for the presence of kangaroos?

- a. They are aggressive, dangerous, and attack cars on the road.
- b. Cars hit and kill them as they cross the road causing accidents.
- c. They are fast animals and only slow down when they see the signal.
- d. They are afraid to cross the road; the signal makes the cars stop.

5. The marsupial bag is necessary because _____

- a. they collect the food that they find in the forest in it.
- b. they carry bottled water to feed their young in it.
- c. they transport their young when they are babies in it.
- d. they nurse the leader of the group before going to collect food in it.

Name _____

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6. Kangaroo meat is _____

- a. popular worldwide because it has a low protein level.
- b. a bit dry but the skin is used to make clothes.
- c. consumed by Australian aborigines even today.
- d. very expensive and can only be eaten in Australia.



7. Kangaroos typically reproduce _____

- a. to be safe from the many predators they have.
- b. in spring and summer months, but can reproduce throughout the year.
- c. by laying an egg in a nest and caring for it until the young can move by itself.
- d. and want two baby kangaroos, but can only have one in each pregnancy.

8. The kangaroo's food _____

- a. is mainly based on meat and insects they hunt at night.
- b. gives them strength to travel great distances across the whole planet.
- c. is herbivorous and have special teeth to tear and crush the food.
- d. is only what humans feed them; kangaroos would disappear without humans.



9. The size of a kangaroo is similar to that of humans.

- a. True
- b. False

10. Occasionally, there are complaints about kangaroos from ranchers and farmers because _____

- a. kangaroos jump through their fields killing the crops.
- b. kangaroos eat their pastures and destroy the crops.
- c. kangaroos are large and destroy all the trees when they go through.
- d. kangaroos make unpleasant sounds which keep the crops from growing.