

# Eastern Grey Kangaroo

## Size:

A male Eastern Grey Kangaroo can grow to 1.5 m tall with a 1m long tail and can weigh up to 85kg.

## What they eat:

Kangaroos are herbivores, eating grass, leaves and roots.

## Life span:

Up to 6 years in the wild and 20 years in captivity.

## Habitat:

Kangaroos are found throughout Australia, inhabiting grassy plains.

## Threats:

Dingoes and humans.

## About the Eastern Grey Kangaroo?

Kangaroos are one of the largest species of marsupial. Male Eastern Grey Kangaroos can reach up to 1.5m in height with an additional 1m long tail. They belong to a group of marsupials called macropods which means 'great footed animals'. All macropods have strong back legs with long feet. They hop on their back legs when travelling and use their tail as a balance.

Incredibly, they can maintain a speed of 20 kilometres per hour (kph) for long periods of time. For short periods they can hop at speeds of up to 65 kph. As their speed increases, so does the length of their hop, some kangaroos reach a distance of up to 6 metres in one hop!

Whilst hopping is energy efficient at high speed, at low speed, it is both clumsy and energetically expensive. They have an awkward walk using their hind legs with the tail providing additional support for the front legs. Most kangaroos can only move both back legs together and not one at a time and they can only move forwards, not backwards.



Kangaroos don't make many sounds. They have been heard making grunting and coughing sounds, they sometimes hiss, and females may make clicking or clucking sounds to call their young. A more common sound for kangaroos is a loud thumping they make with their feet to warn others of danger.

## Where do they live?

Eastern Grey Kangaroos occupy most of the eastern third of Australia, especially along the coast in damp forest and scrub. They have increased in numbers since European settlement due to land clearing and pasture improvement, and the provision of watering points for stock.

They are mostly nocturnal, which means they are more active at night. During the warmer months they rest during the day in the shade of rocks or bushes. Those that live in the desert areas simply lie in the sun. To keep cool they drool and lick saliva over their faces and bodies.



## What do they eat?

Kangaroos survive on grass and other vegetation such as leaves and roots. They swallow their food without chewing it and later regurgitate a cud and chew it.

## A kangaroo's family life

Most kangaroos have no set breeding cycle and are able to breed all year round. They are able to adjust their breeding cycles according to the availability of food and the weather in the area. If there is plenty of food available a female kangaroo will continue to breed and raise her young.

A newborn kangaroo is less than two centimetres long and a gram in weight and is called a joey. As soon as it is born it struggles through its mother's fur into her pouch. She licks a path in her fur for it to travel along.

Inside the pouch it grabs onto one of four teats and stays there for 4-5 weeks. At 4 months the joey will leave the pouch for short periods and at 9 months will leave the pouch permanently. Whilst a newborn is attached, an older sibling, although still not fully weaned may poke its head into the pouch for milk. Each of the offspring feeds only from its own individual teat and each teats supply different mixes of nutrients depending on the age of the young.

Kangaroos tend to be semi-nomadic and travel in groups called mobs. They are led by an older male who pushes other males out of the mob resulting in the females outnumbering males 5 to 1.

## Where to see a kangaroo in Victorian parks.

Kangaroos are common in many parks throughout Victoria. Near Melbourne, good opportunities to see kangaroos include parks such as Lysterfield Park and the Serendip Sanctuary.

### Fascinating Fact:

On the Australian coat of arms the Emu and the kangaroo were selected as symbols of Australia representing our progress as a nation because they can only move forward and not backwards.

Parks Victoria's mascot, Ranger Roo is a Red Kangaroo