

## KANGAROOS & WALLABIES

(Map Ref 40)



MP, LS, US



Kangaroos, wallabies and wallaroos all belong in a group called macropods which means 'great foot'. Macropods have very strong, well-developed hind limbs, used for movement, compared to their smaller fore limbs, used for foraging and gripping. The tail is used as support when the macropods sit and it also helps to balance the body when they are leaping.

In Australia, there are many different kinds of macropod which live in a variety of habitats from rainforests to deserts. There are also a number of different species within each of these groups of macropods. For example there are several different species of kangaroos.

Macropods are herbivores, eating only plant materials, mostly this is grasses, however, some eat leaves and bark too. They prefer to eat early in the morning and evening when it is light but cool. During the heat of the day they will lay around in groups conserving their energy.

Kangaroos are marsupials which means that they have a pouch for their joeys. When marsupial young are born they are very underdeveloped so the pouch is a secure, warm location with a ready food supply for them to continue their development. Kangaroos only ever have one Joey in the pouch at a time and it will start to leave the pouch when it is about 6 months old but will return at times for milk from its mother. The young kangaroo becomes completely independent at about 10 months.

Kangaroos move in different ways:

**CRAWL** - a slow movement used when grazing. Uses both front and back legs.



**LOW SPEED BOUND** - tail is used to help balance, fore limbs do not touch the ground.



**HIGH SPEED BOUND** - tail and hind limbs are fully extended during this time. Reaches speeds of



Q2

Try and think of answers for these:

- Why do kangaroos have large, moving ears?  
THEY ARE ACTIVE AT TIMES OF LOW LIGHT SO THEY CAN GRAZE AND HEAR APPROACHING THREATS AT THE SAME TIME.
  - How does their colour help them?  
IT CAMOFLAGES RED KANGAROOS AGAINST THE SAND WHERE THEY LIVE IN ARID AREAS, THE GREY KANGAROOS BLEND IN WITH GRASSES AND TREES WHERE THEY LIVE IN WOODLAND AREAS.
  - Why are their eyes at the side of their head?  
TO INCREASE THEIR FIELD OF VISION AND TO BE ABLE TO OBSERVE THEIR SURROUNDINGS DURING FEEDING WHILE THEIR HEAD IS DOWN.
  - Why do only females have a pouch?  
MALES DON'T NEED ONE IT IS ONLY FEMALES WHICH GIVE BIRTH AND CARE FOR THE JOEYS.
- THESE ARE ALL CALLED ADAPTATIONS.**

What are the advantages of having a pouch?

*Try and think of at least five.*

Q3

YOUNG ARE GIVEN WARMTH, A CONSTANT FOOD SUPPLY, PROTECTION FROM PREDATORS, PROTECTION FROM OTHER KANGAROOS & SIBLINGS, THE MOTHER CAN TRANSPORT THEM EASILY, SHE DOESN'T NEED TO BUILD A SHELTER OR NEST, SHE IS ABLE TO MAKE A QUICK ESCAPE IF THREATENED BY A PREDATOR, BEING NOMADIC A POUCH MEANS SHE IS NOT RESTRICTED TO AN AREA WHILST HER YOUNG STILL REQUIRE CONSTANT CARE.

A1

Your group might like to feed the kangaroos. Food is able to be purchased from the kiosk at the Green Challenge or from your education officer upon request.

#### KANGAROO MANNERS

When you visit someone's house, you always show your manners. When visiting a kangaroo's house, you must do the same. Show your kangaroo manners by:

- Squatting down beside them, to stand up next to them is a sign of aggression
- Touching them along their back, not around their head
- Keeping your hand flat while you're feeding them, this will make it easier for the kangaroo and save you from any little nips!
- Staying down low when feeding them, don't encourage them to stand up, in kangaroo language this can be like picking a fight.
- Leaving the joeys alone. Never touch the joeys while they are in the pouch, they'll lose their own special smell and its mum might not take care of it any more.
- Being careful of those long tails - they're very sensitive when stood on!
- Staying away from the feeding trays, you don't want to be seen as competition!

The best way to make friends with a roo is to stay low and give it nice long pats along its back. They are always thankful for a kangaroo massage!