

JR FACT FILE



EASTERN GREY KANGAROO

Macropus giganteus



About the Eastern Grey Kangaroo

Kangaroos are one of the largest species of marsupial. The male Eastern Grey Kangaroo can reach up to 1.5 m in height with an additional 1 m 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, Eastern Grey Kangaroos 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 6 metres in 1 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.

Eastern Grey Kangaroos don't make many sounds. They have been heard grunting or coughing, 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.

AT A GLANCE

Size:

A male Eastern Grey Kangaroo can grow to 1.5 m tall and can weigh up to 60 kg.

What it eats:

Kangaroos are herbivores, eating grass, leaves and roots.

Life span:

They live up to 6 years in the wild and 20 years in captivity.

Habitat:

The Eastern Grey Kangaroo is found in eastern Australia from Cape York Peninsula to Tasmania. They are widespread in southern and eastern Victoria however they are not found in north western Victoria; here you will find Western Grey Kangaroos.

Threats:

Dingoes and humans.

Where do Eastern Grey Kangaroos 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 provisions of watering points for stock.

Kangaroos are mostly nocturnal, which means they are more active at night. During the warmer months they rest during the day in the shade. To keep cool they drool and lick saliva off their faces and bodies.

What does the Eastern Grey Kangaroo 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

The Eastern Grey Kangaroo has no set breeding cycle and they're able to breed all year round. Kangaroos are able to adjust their breeding cycles according to the availability of food and the weather in the area.

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If there is plenty of food available a female kangaroo will continue to breed and raise her young.

A newborn kangaroo is less than 2 cm 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 1 of the 4 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, 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 teat supplies different mixes of nutrients depending on the age of the young.

The Eastern Grey Kangaroo tends 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 females outnumbering males 5 to 1.

Where to see an Eastern Grey Kangaroo in Victoria's parks.

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



Mother and joey – Wilsons Promontory National Park

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.