

Koalas, in Danger of Becoming Extinct

VOCABULARY WORDS

1. cuddliness /'kædlē-ness/ state of being endearing and pleasant to cuddle, especially as a result of being soft or plump.
Example: The cuddliness of the teddy bear made me want to buy it.
2. marsupial /mār'sōopēəl/ a type of mammal where babies are born before they are fully developed and then continue to grow in a pouch on their mother's stomach
Example: Kangaroos are marsupials.
3. endangered /in'dānjərd,en'dānjərd/ (of a species) seriously at risk of extinction.
Example: The government created a legislation to protect endangered species of the country.
4. vulnerable /'vəln(ə)rəb(ə)l/ in need of special care, support, or protection because of age, disability, or risk of abuse or neglect.
Example: Employees must be better trained in how to deal with vulnerable young people.
5. tipping point (phrasal) the point at which a series of small changes or incidents becomes significant enough to cause a larger, more important change
Example: We are reaching a tipping point at which damage is irreversible and, even worse, accelerating.



The koala is regarded as the representation of **cuddliness**. However, animal lovers will be saddened to hear that this lovable **marsupial** has been moved to the **endangered** species list. The Australian Koala Foundation estimates there are somewhere between 43,000-100,000 koalas left in the wild. Their numbers have been decreasing rapidly due to disease, loss of home, bushfires, being hit by cars, and other threats.

Stuart Blanch from the World Wildlife Fund in Australia said: "Koalas have gone from no listing to **vulnerable** to endangered within a decade. That is a shockingly fast decline." He added that koalas risk "sliding toward destruction" unless there are "stronger laws...to protect their forest homes".

The koala has huge cultural significance for Australia. Wikipedia writes: "The koala is well known worldwide and is a major draw for Australian zoos and wildlife parks. It has been featured in advertisements, games, cartoons, and as soft toys. It benefited the national tourism industry by over an estimated billion Australian dollars in 1998, a figure that has since grown."

Despite this, efforts to protect the koala have been failing. Australia's Environment Minister Sussan Ley said there have been "many pressures on the koala," and that it is "vulnerable to climate change and to disease". She said the 2019-2020 bushfires, which killed at least 6,400 of the animals, were "**a tipping point**".

DISCUSSION

1. How would you feel if the koala became extinct?
2. What are the world's cuddliest creatures?
3. What animals are culturally significant in your country?
4. What do you think of zoos?
5. What can you do to help protect koalas?
6. What will the state of wildlife be in 50 years from now?