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## Koala: Bushfires in Australia

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### Why in News

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Australia is in the grips of a nationwide bushfire emergency which has severely affected wildlife.

- It's been estimated that 1.25 billion native animals have perished in the **Australian bushfires**, including koalas, kangaroos, wallabies, wombats, echidnas and more.
- Koalas are among the first animals to perish in wildfires because the slow-moving creatures can't outrun the flames.



### Key Points

- Koala is (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) an **arboreal (lives in trees) marsupial**.
  - **Marsupial:** A marsupial is born in a very incomplete state. They are minute, hairless and with hind limbs only partially formed. Around 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of them live in Australia. The other third live mostly in South America.
  - Instead of the placenta, the mother's milk nourishes the young and allows it to grow and develop.
  - Although the word 'marsupial' comes from the Latin word 'marsupium', which means 'pouch', **not all marsupials have pouches**.
- They are **endemic to Australia**.
- Due to the low nutrient levels of the Eucalyptus leaves they feed on, the koala can sleep up to 18 hours each day.

- IUCN status: **Vulnerable**
- **Threats:** Habitat destruction, climate change & severe weather (Droughts, extreme temperatures).