



# Koalas as Endangered Species: Australia

## Why in News?

Recently, Australia has officially classified koalas as **'endangered'**.

## Why classified as Endangered and its Significance?

### ▪ Classification as Endangered:

- Australia's Koala population has been on the road to extinction **for over two decades now**. The number of Koalas in NSW (New South Wales) declined by between 33% and 61% since 2001.
- But despite several demands by animal rights groups and conservationists, the government has been accused of doing little to protect the species. Koalas were classified as "vulnerable" only in 2012.
- During the catastrophic 2019 bushfires in Australia, now known as the **'Black Summer'**, **an estimated 60,000 koalas were impacted**, with vast swathes of their habitat being blackened and rendered unliveable.
- Another major threat is the **spread of chlamydia, a sexually transmitted disease** known to cause blindness and cysts in the koalas reproductive tract.

### ▪ Significance:

- The Endangered status of the koala means **they and their forest homes should be provided with greater protection under Australia's national environmental law.**

## What are the Key Things about Koalas?

### ▪ About: [//](#)



- Koala is (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) **an arboreal (lives in trees) 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.
- They share **a number of characteristics with wombats**, who are their closest living relatives, **including a backward-facing pouch**.
- **Habitat:**
  - The typical habitat for Koalas is **open eucalypt woodlands**, and the leaves of these trees make up most of their diet. In terms of societal behavior, Koalas are asocial animals and **typically emotional bonding is seen only between mothers and dependent offspring**.
  - 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).

**Source: IE**

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