

Eastern Grey Kangaroo *Macropus giganteus*

Introduction

Perhaps the most popular of the Australian marsupials is the Eastern Grey Kangaroo. It was first seen by non-indigenous Australians in 1770 when Cook's expedition stopped for several weeks near Cooktown, Queensland. Several kangaroos were taken back to England, one of which has been identified as a Grey Kangaroo.



Eastern Grey Kangaroos
Photographer / Source: Gary Lewis

Where do they occur?

The Eastern Grey Kangaroo has a wide distribution between the plains of the inland and the coast and lives in habitats from semi-arid mallee scrub through woodland to forest. The species occupies a large range in which there is an overlap of two species, the Eastern and Western Grey Kangaroo. Eastern Greys can be recognised by

Further Reading

Menkhorst, P. (Ed.) (1995). *Mammals of Victoria*. Oxford University Press. Melbourne

Strahan, R. (Ed.) (1995). *The Mammals of Australia*. Reed. Chatswood. N.S.W.

their grey fur and hairy muzzle, which has fine hairs between the nostril and upper lip.

What do they eat?

Eastern Grey Kangaroos are primarily grazing animals with grasses as their preferred food. Usually they rest in the shade during the heat of the day and feed in the late afternoon or early morning.

What is their breeding cycle?

Breeding occurs throughout the year, but the birth peak is in summer. Following mating, gestation takes about 36 days. Before birth occurs, the female takes up a crouching position and the newborn young climbs from the urogenital opening to the pouch, attaching itself to one of four teats. The mother may mate again while the young is in the pouch, but the fertilised egg does not develop until the young one leaves the pouch at about 11 months of age.

The joey still suckles from the mother until about 18 months old, but by then another young, up to seven months old, may be in the pouch.

What is their conservation status?

Eastern Grey Kangaroos are abundant on mainland Australia, but are vulnerable in Tasmania. Both Eastern and Western Grey Kangaroos are protected by law.