

Walks & Talks



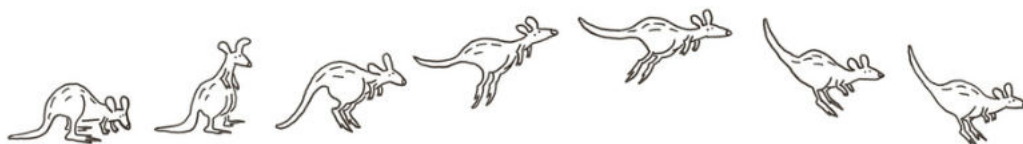
**Kangaroos
ALIVE**

MEET THE MOB



Connect your community to their local mob.
Build appreciation and understanding for
Kangaroos.

The social family behaviour of kangaroos is something we
as a species share with them and as such makes
kangaroos more relatable to us.





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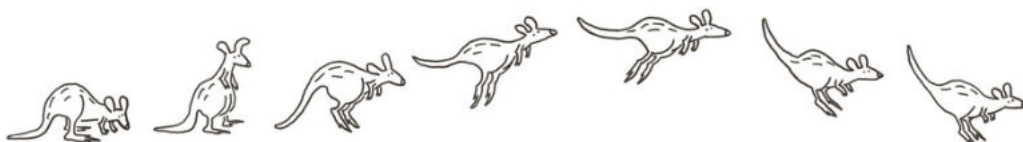
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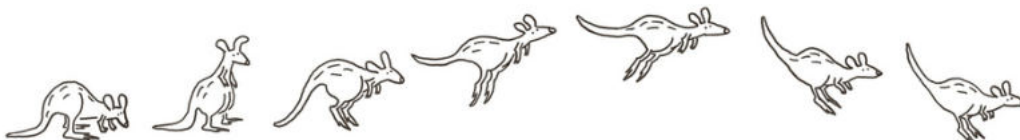
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GUIDE TIPS

1. Approach your local Community Centre, Library or Council to support the event
2. Make posters and post on local social media pages
3. 5-6 people is ideal (allow extra allocations for cancellations)
4. Ask people to RSVP
5. Invite all your friends
6. The best time to see kangaroos is dusk and dawn
7. Print a 'Meet Here' and direction signs so people can find you
8. Print and laminate the behaviour cards in case no Kangaroos are sighted.
9. Read and obey the Public Liability insurance information
10. Get a first aid certificate
11. Have the waivers printed on a clipboard with a pen for people to sign when they arrive.
12. Don't think you need to know everything. "Great question!" "a possible reason could be.." "Does anyone have any ideas on this?" are all good responses
13. Wear a Kangaroo Walk and Talk name tag or Hoodie/T-shirt so you are easily identifiable
14. The below script is a 'guide' based on observations of Eastern Grey kangaroos. Please adapt the script to your area, and species of macropod.
15. Adapt the script to suit YOU. You may want to ask participants on your tour what they know about kangaroos, then observe kangaroos and dispel the myths as you do the tour eg 'they are a pest', reproductive cycles etc.
16. You may focus on Kangaroos and Country with observation and a yarnning circle rather than the script.
17. Always take the time to observe, learn from, and protect kangaroos.



SCRIPT

Welcome to [this morning's/this evening's] gathering on [First Nations] Country acknowledging Elders past, present and emerging.

We also acknowledge Back-to-country and Yuin Elder Uncle Max author of the Yuin Declaration for Kangaroos. And Dr Anthony McKnight from Back-To-Country who helps us understand, learn from and care for Country.

First Nations people are born with the the obligation to care for Country. Country is the knowledge holder, the teacher. We invite you to take of and learn from the gifts that Country provides us whether it be air, water or the kangaroo. Use your senses to observe the kangaroos and their surroundings; Look, listen and see

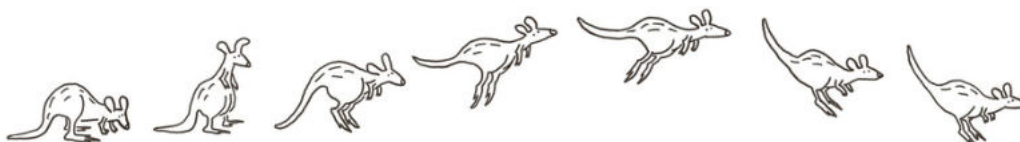
Firstly a few bits of house keeping:

- 1.Has everyone signed the waiver?
- 2.Please beware while you walk for hazards such as rocks or low lying branches
- 3.Please stay 50m away from wildlife where possible and don't make loud noises or direct eye contact as that can be threatening
- 4.Please stay together as a group

I invite you to imagine what Australia would have looked like when woodlands and grasslands dominated the landscape. No buildings, no roads, no people.

Now consider the changes these unique and ancient animals have seen over that period—the slow and incremental changes to landscape, to vegetation, to waterways. Always having a place that was home to them—a place of familiar hills and gullies, a place for family and growth, and a place for neighbouring mobs. A place where First Nations people lived in oneness with Kangaroos.

Then think about the changes that have occurred in more recent times when those from other lands arrived here by ship and immediately started transforming, redesigning and pushing back the natural world. The arrival of colonialism was a dramatic and rapid invasion with devastating effects for First Nations people and wildlife. Australia has lost more mammal species to extinction than any other continent in the world.



SCRIPT PAGE 2

If we are privileged to see Kangaroos today then we do so on their terms. I ask that you remain as still and quiet as possible; we don't want them to feel threatened by our presence. So we won't be taking steps toward them and will keep our distance. They will decide if we are too close or not, and will move accordingly. Observe and see what you can learn from kangaroos.

THE KANGAROO

There are about 70 species of macropods which kangaroos, wallabies, pademelons are all part of. However, today we are focusing on Eastern Grey kangaroos. There will be similarities and differences across all species of macropods.

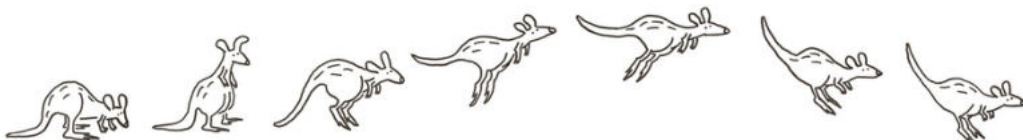
Like us, Kangaroos live in communities called 'mobs.' Mobs are larger and more stable in grey kangaroos and antilopine wallaroos but more dynamic and variable in red kangaroos and other wallaroos. Environmental factors such as availability of food and water, and family make-up also effect mobs size. Mobs can be a large variety of sizes from 10 to 250!, but typically they group together in a population of 40 or 50, occupying a localised site that we should think about as their home. Indeed, these groups and locations would comprise a cluster of families and their relatives.

We can also recognise some traditional structures within those families. As primary care-givers, females are in charge with the males occupying a more peripheral position, protecting the family and occasionally interacting between themselves for positions of seniority and breeding rights. The older females in this matriarchal hierarchy make decisions of where and when to move.

Joeys are, of course, the youngest and the most vulnerable and remain so up to approximately two years of age. They start their lives by crawling as an embryo the size of a jelly bean, out of the birth canal and make a perilous, vertical journey up the fur of their mother's abdomen and then crawl into her pouch, where they will remain for up to 5 months. As they grow they will spend time in and out of the pouch for up to 9 months before being out permanently or 'at-foot.' They love to explore—not too far from their mums—and young males can be seen play-fighting, which is an activity preparing them for later life.

Their mothers have an extraordinary ability to provide different milk formulas if they have two joeys, one 'in-pouch' and one 'at-foot'. Their mothers also have an ability to pause a in-utero pregnancy due to hormonal changes with a lack of oxytocin.

As we've come to realise, an area of land, perhaps only a few square kilometres, will be treated as their home and the majority won't travel far from it. Occasionally males will roam and perhaps encounter another family in which they may join usually by having an interaction with the strongest male from the mob.



SCRIPT PAGE 3

Adult males will often 'square off' against existing top male of a mob to gain the right to mate and reproduce. The kicking behaviour seen in these encounters is practised throughout their young lives, often starting harmlessly with their mothers, and then progresses to their friends or siblings. But in adult males, the kicks have enormous power and have the potential to disembowel, although the skin on their abdomen has adapted through thickening as additional protection. These skirmishes decide a position of power with the stronger male emerging from these contests can often be observed rubbing their chest on the ground; this is scenting the area along with urination.

Male will indicate their surrender by lowering themselves into a position of subservience and make coughing-like noises. They will often retreat from the mob and can be seen in isolation, perhaps even venturing into non-wild or semi-urban locations, to escape the fighting or to recover from it.

When temperatures soar in summer, Kangaroos will pant which generates excess saliva that is then licked onto their forearms which helps keep cool.

When they are completely relaxed, they will lie flat on their sides, but they are typically seen with their head and shoulders raised keeping an eye and ear out for danger. If danger approaches they are quick to mobilise to escape it and enormous amounts of energy are expended in doing so.

When living in their habitat, they will graze on native grasses and prefer the newest, greenest shoots. As they have upper and lower incisors they only snip halfway down a shaft of grass and therefore always leave a ground cover.

Kangaroo relationships are complex and inconsistent. There is no one size fits all, but one thing is sure; they all need and depend on each other. They share food and space and let others know with foot and tail thumping and vocalisations if there is a threat nearby. Kangaroos comfort each other with tactile things like hugging, grooming and sleeping with their head on another. They bring joy through chasing games and playful wrestling. They communicate with each other through vocalisations, facial expressions and head, arm and ear movements.

SEE BEHAVIOUR CARDS



SCRIPT PAGE 4

10 -20 minutes observation LOOK LISTEN SEE...

Have you tried hopping like a Kangaroo? Let's compare how far and how high we can jump and how far we saw the kangaroos jump? What is the difference

YARNING CIRCLE (get everyone to form a circle and discuss)

What did you see? What behaviours did you notice and why do you think the kangaroos did them? (imitate the behaviour where possible)

Now thinking about First Nations understanding of Country and our interconnectedness. Was there something that observing Country taught you as an individual? Did you notice how softly the mother nurtures her joey? Is that perhaps a way you should be interacting with someone at the moment? Did you find it easy to be present with Country or did you have urges to look at phone - what does that tell you? Or maybe despite myths you noticed kangaroos can move backwards. Is that a message to you to step back rather than always pushing forward. Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forward.

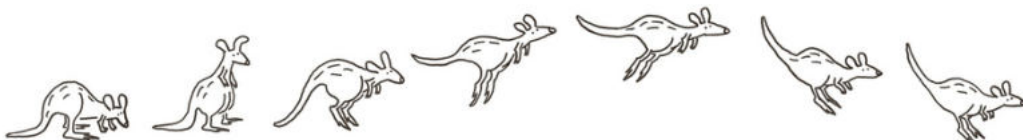
Encourage everyone to share their learnings

CONCLUSION

When you head home keep an eye on the roads for kangaroos especially at dawn and dusk. If you do see an injured kangaroo on the side of the road please stop and check on their well being even if you think the kangaroo can not be saved. It is important to check the pouch to see if there is a joey inside or a lost joey in the area.

It is easy to make a rescue kit for your car. You can use two pillow cases and a torch (or use the torch on your phone). Instructions are on the Kangaroos Alive website kangaroosalive.org where you will also find the Yuin Declaration for Kangaroos which can be printed out and shared.

Thank you for coming today and we hope you continue to connect with our local mob by taking the time to learn, see and protect. Please record any interesting behaviours and get in touch with us about your findings



RESOURCES

KANGAROO WALKS AND TALKS KIT

<https://www.kangaroosalive.org/walkandtalk>

RESCUE KIT

<https://www.worldkangarooday.org/kangaroo-road-rescue-kit>

YUIN DECLARATION

<https://www.kangaroosalive.org/yuin-declaration>

FIRST NATIONS MAP

<https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/map-indigenous-australia>

MACROPOD SPECIES

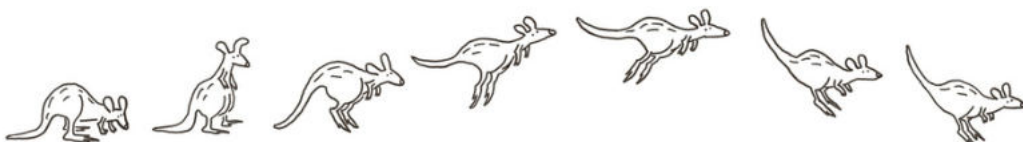
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1TQtwh049gQHHgbtGq_bjflDjwruStNfJ3GSOXje4Ymk/edit#gid=0

<https://www.ala.org.au/>

<https://www.rootourism.com/>

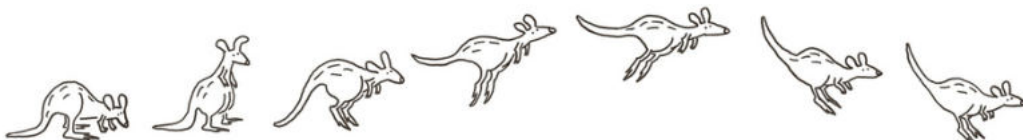
PLANT SPECIES

<https://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/publiclookupcommunities.pl>



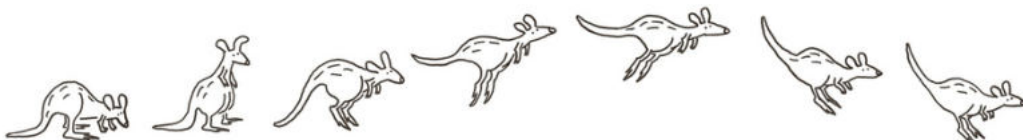
FACTS

- There are 71 known macropod species (51 in Australia)
- Kangaroos and their ancestors have lived on this land for a long time—20 million years
- They are primarily left-handed, using their left hand for precision and right hand for strength
- They live in family groups called Mobs.
- Mobs are primarily matriarchal with the females staying with the family and the males moving away from the bloodlines of their mother at 3-4 years of age.
- Mobs work together finding food, looking after young and being alert from predators.
- Red kangaroos can easily travel long distances at a speed of around 56km/h, in bounds of 9m length and 3m height
- Males are called Boomers, Bucks or Jacks; Females are called Does, Flyers or Jills; Babies are called Joeys
- The gestation period for kangaroos is about 4 weeks. The 'pinkie' about the size of a grape (2.5cm) then crawls up into the mothers pouch where it attaches itself to one of its mothers 4 nipples. Joeys start leaving their mothers pouch for short periods once it has grown fur at about 6 months of age and will drink milk until it is about 1 year old and leave the pouch permanently at about 9 months
- Pregnant kangaroos can pause the development cycle of its baby in-utero. This embryonic diapause is especially handy in times of drought and whenever there are food shortages. Red kangaroos can become infertile at high temperatures and lick their scrotums to prevent this.
- A mother creates a unique milk for pouch young and at-foot joeys. The in-utero young is supported by a pseudo-placenta
- Male kangaroos learn to box from a young age. The aim is to become the champion 'boxer' of a mob. The 'champion boxer' is seen to have the best genes and therefore has the ability to sire the young of the mob. In areas where 'commercial shooting' occurs you can see the devastating effects on a mob when the strongest mature males have been killed.
- Like reptiles and birds Kangaroos have a cloaca. However, internally it is very different for female kangaroos with the cloaca dividing into three vaginas. Babies travelling down the middle vagina and sperm traveling up the outside two. Female kangaroos also have two uteruses.



FACTS PAGE 2

- Female Eastern-grey Kangaroos do not experience menopause but early on they tend to produce only female offspring. When they are at the end of their reproductive lives they tend to produce males.
- Kangaroos usually have 1 baby per year.
- The average lifespan of a wild kangaroo is 8 years
- Kangaroos have excellent hearing and can rotate their ears 180 degrees so they can scan the full 360 degrees
- The kangaroo's tail is used like an extra leg. The tail provides more power to propel movement than their legs. The tail is also used for balance.
- When a kangaroo hops through native grasslands their tail spreads the seeds of the native plants.
- Red Kangaroos can grow as tall as 2m and weigh 90kg, making it the planets tallest marsupial
- Humans and dingos are kangaroos main predators. More kangaroos are killed by the commercial meat and leather industry than any other land-based wildlife on the planet
- Kangaroos are mostly killed for pet food, human consumption and leather. Their skin is often used for soccer boots and luxury upholstery
- Kangaroos are herbivores; eating grasses, herbs, flowers, mosses, lichens and shrubs depending on their species and location.
- Kangaroos have a small appetite, eating only a fifth of what a sheep would eat and drink in a given period
- Kangaroos barely emit any methane
- Kangaroos need little water to survive and can go months without drinking
- Some kangaroos swim
- Kangaroos can't hop backwards but can move backwards
- The word 'kangaroo' derives from the Guuga Yimithirr peoples word for Eastern Grey's 'gangurru'
- A Kangaroo appears on the Australian coat of arms
- Kangaroos are most active at dawn and dusk
- Kangaroos are one of the few native Australian mammals that we can observe interacting with their family. They are our teachers.



10 THINGS YOU CAN DO TO HELP KANGAROOS

1. Don't buy kangaroo products
(Check petfood, football boots, souvenirs)
2. Watch the movie- Kangaroo A Love-Hate Story
3. Celebrate WorldKangarooDay.org on October 24
4. Advocate for a 'kangaroo killing free zone' in your area
5. Volunteer at your local wildlife shelter
6. Adopt the Yuin Declaration for Kangaroos
7. Get to know your kangaroo local mob
8. Make a Kangaroo Road Rescue Kit
9. Educate friends about kangaroos
10. Build practical ways to coexist with kangaroos in your community

