

## Mother Marsupials

Imagine a kangaroo. You are probably thinking of a mother kangaroo with a baby peeking out of her pouch. But did you know that kangaroos are not the only animals that have pouches?

Animals with pouches are called marsupials. Many marsupials live in Australia. Some examples are the kangaroo, the koala, and the wombat.

The opossum is the only marsupial that lives in the United States. Like its relatives, it carries its babies in a pouch. The pouch is an important part of its reproductive process.

Opossum babies are born the size of a honeybee. They have a lot of growing up to do! After they are born, they crawl into their mother's pouch to continue growing.

In the pouch, marsupial babies can drink their mother's milk. They are protected from any predators. They can travel with their mother so they are never left alone.

Marsupial babies are all called joeys. They stay in their mother's pouch for different amounts of time. Some species, like kangaroos, keep their babies in their pouches for up to a year.



Once they leave the pouch, marsupial babies still need their mothers. They often ride on her back or cling to her side as they continue to grow. During this time, the joeys learn to find food and avoid predators.

Many people think that marsupial pouches are cute and cuddly. More importantly, they are sophisticated systems for baby care.



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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Which of the following animals is NOT a marsupial?
  - a. Kangaroo
  - b. Opossum
  - c. Raccoon
  - d. Wombat
  
2. Which marsupial lives in the United States?
  - a. Opossum
  - b. Koala
  - c. Wombat
  - d. Honeybee
  
3. Why do marsupials need pouches?
  - a. Their babies have no fur
  - b. Their babies need to drink milk
  - c. Their babies are cold
  - d. Their babies are born very small
  
4. How does the pouch protect joeys from predators?
  - a. Joeys are never left alone
  - b. Joeys can drink milk
  - c. Joeys can stay warm
  - d. Joeys continue to grow

Instructions for teachers:

These questions can be used to assess understanding of the reading passage.

The item in bold is the correct answer for each question.

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