

Name: _____

World's Largest Marsupial

By Guy Belleranti

What Australian mammal can leap 25 feet in one hop and move for short periods at 35 miles an hour? The red kangaroo. A full grown male stands as tall as a six foot person and weighs 200 pounds. This is slightly bigger than the grey kangaroo, making it the world's largest marsupial.



What's a marsupial? A mammal where the mother has a pouch for carrying, feeding and protecting her young.

While a red kangaroo may be the largest marsupial, the newborn baby is tiny, under an inch long. After a few months of sleeping, nursing and growing in mom's stomach pouch the young kangaroo (joey) begins to come out. But it hurries back to the pouch fast when frightened, hungry or cold. Eventually, the joey gets so big it hangs out of the pouch. Then, at eight months old, it stays out. But the joey remains close to mom until ready to live on its own.

Red kangaroos are good swimmers. However, they are best known for their hopping abilities. Their long, powerful hind legs have big feet. Hopping moves them quickly over their grassy, shrubby and desert habitats. Meanwhile, a thick tail helps them balance and steer.

What do red kangaroos eat? Grass, leaves and other vegetation. And guess what - they often regurgitate food and chew their cud just like a cow.

The red kangaroo's vegetarian diet provides much of its water. It can also go long periods without drinking. Staying in the shade, panting and limiting most activity to nighttime helps the red kangaroo conserve water and stay cool.

Red kangaroos travel together in groups called mobs. Mobs include both males and females, with one male being dominant.

Males show their dominance by "boxing" with other males. They balance on their tails and try pushing each other off balance with their forearms or by kicking their hind legs. This kicking ability, along with their sharp claws, can also be used by kangaroos to defend against Australia's wild dog, the dingo.

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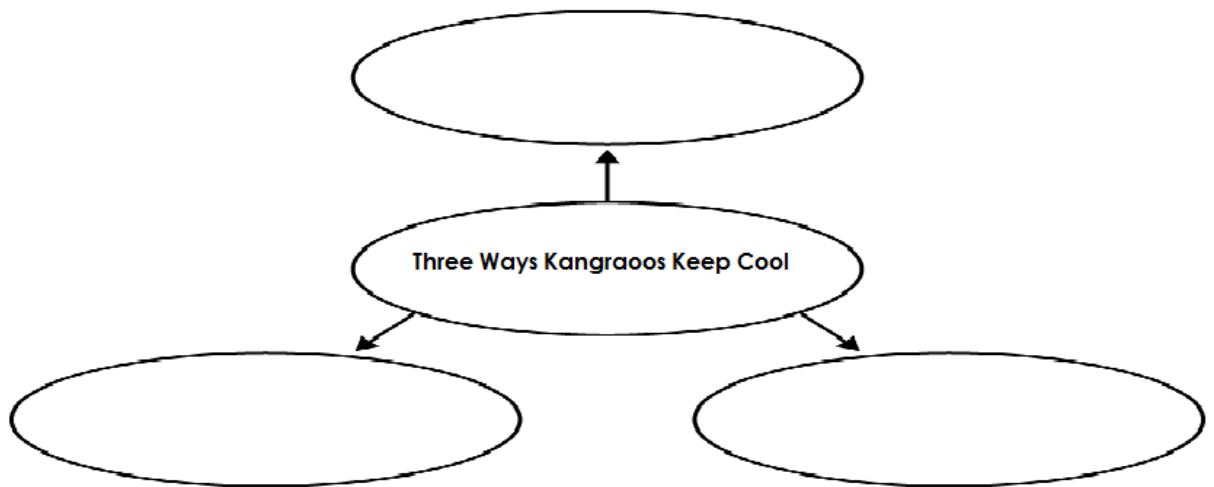
1. Red kangaroos are...

- a. omnivores
- b. carnivores
- c. herbivores
- d. insectivores



Explain why you chose the answer above.

2. Complete the graphic organizer.



3. When does a baby kangaroo come out of its mother's pouch for the first time?

- a. about a month after it is born
- b. a few months after it is born
- c. about 8 months after it is born
- d. when it is a year old

4. A group of kangaroos is called a _____.

5. A baby kangaroo is called a _____.

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The scrambled words below are vocabulary words from the article. Unscramble each word and write it on the line. Please be sure each word is spelled correctly.



1. _____

n o d i g

hint: type of wild dog in Australia

2. _____

l p a e

hint: long, high jump

3. _____

o n a t i v e g e t

hint: plants

4. _____

i g p t a n n

hint: breathing heavily to cool off

5. _____

d r t e e s

hint: place that is dry most of the time

6. _____

a n d c e o m i n

hint: power over others; controlling

7. _____

p m i s u a l a r

hint: type of mammal in which the mother has a pouch for carrying her young

ANSWER KEY

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1. Red kangaroos are...

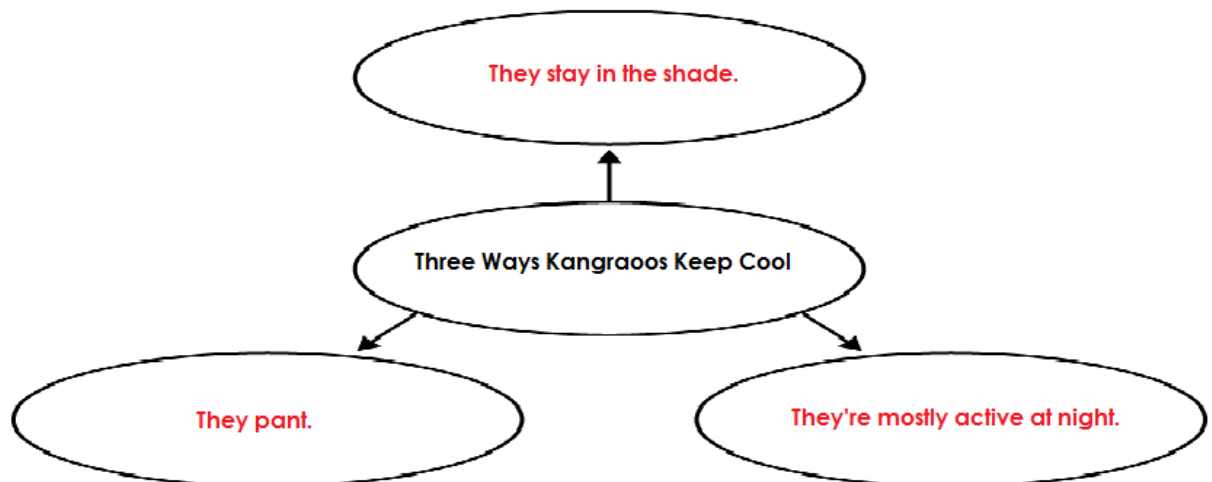
- a. omnivores
- b. carnivores
- c. **herbivores**
- d. insectivores

Explain why you chose the answer above.

Herbivores, like the red kangaroo, eat only plant life.



2. Complete the graphic organizer.



3. When does a baby kangaroo come out of its mother's pouch for the first time? **b**

- a. about a month after it is born
- b. **a few months after it is born**
- c. about 8 months after it is born
- d. when it is a year old

4. A group of kangaroos is called a **mob**.

5. A baby kangaroo is called a **joey**.

