



CHAMPIONS
OF THE
WILD

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OF THE
WILD

KOALAS

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AS SEEN ON
DISCOVERY
AND
ANIMAL
PLANET



VHS

C9198 139

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KOALAS



Over a span of 40 million years, the koala has developed into a highly specialized, unique creature perfectly adapted to its environment, but its environment is disappearing.

Australians once slaughtered koalas with enthusiasm. During the 1920s alone, three million were killed for their fur. Today their direct destruction is no longer socially acceptable, but they continue to fall victim to habitat loss and the stresses of contemporary life. As the Australian economy grows, the eucalyptus forests where these fascinating creatures live fall victim to bulldozers and other forms of destruction, leaving hungry and stressed koalas to find new homes. Many will not survive.

Although they are popularly known as koala bears, koalas are in fact marsupials, like kangaroos. Their babies (known as joeys) are born a mere 35 days after conception and spend much of the next six months in their mother's pouch.

With his painstaking research, Steve Phillips has revolutionized our understanding of individual koala behaviour and koala society. Using radio collars and careful observation, he has unlocked the secrets of the koala social hierarchy and learned much about their behaviour. "The tragedy for us is that we're only beginning to understand the complexities of these animals, and understanding them is fundamental to their conservation."

In this episode of **Champions of the Wild**, we see Phillips and Australian Koala Federation head Deborah Tabart in action: they successfully negotiate with the developer of a new housing estate to make koala-saving changes to his original plans. One of the keys to their success is the mammoth Koala Habitat Atlas, which has already recorded details of 60,000 trees where koalas live, and has helped pinpoint precisely which trees are essential to koala survival.

It's this kind of cooperation between the koala champions and the people driving economic growth that will be essential if the koala is to flourish.

Pre-Viewing Questions

1. Where do koalas live?
2. Research the history of the koala as an Australian icon. How did it come to be a symbol of that country?

Post-Viewing Questions

1. There is already legislation in place to protect koalas, so why is their continued existence threatened?
2. Given what you know about koala society, describe what developers and housing development residents can do to protect koalas.
3. Should economic development take the needs of koalas into account?
4. Name three ways in which the koala has evolved perfectly for its environment.



Champions:
**Steve Phillips and
Deborah Tabart**

Champions of the Wild takes you around the globe with stories of remarkable endangered species and the dedicated champions determined to save them. Buy the whole collection!

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World Wide Web Sites

Please note that addresses on the Web can change unexpectedly.

Home page of the Australian Koala Foundation:

www.akfkoala.gil.com.au

Site of the largest koala sanctuary; also a clearinghouse of koala info:

www.koala.net

Koala conservation at the local level. This page belongs to an organization dedicated to protecting koalas in a region southeast of Melbourne:

home.vicnet.net.au/~folklaw/koala.html

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KOALAS



Think Australia and you think koalas. They're cute, they're the country's most-loved symbol – and if we don't stop destroying their habitat, they will soon be gone.

Deborah Tabart and Steve Phillips of the Australian Koala Foundation (AKF) are partners. Tabart, head of the foundation, uses her contacts and savvy to lobby for koala protection. Phillips, a passionate biologist, knows more about koalas than anyone else alive. Together they are helping to map every single koala habitat in Australia, while fighting to protect these highly social creatures.

All it will take to save the koala is a little human accommodation and compromise. As Phillips says, "if we can't save this animal, then we ain't going to save nothing."

Endangered animals – and the champions who have dedicated their lives to saving them – feature in this spectacular series of half-hour videos! Filmed around the world, from the frozen fields of Canada's North to the jungles of Borneo, **Champions of the Wild** combines natural history with personal drama.

Director: **Chris Aikenhead**

Producer: **Christian Bruyère**

Executive Producer: **Michael Chechik**

25 minutes, 30 seconds

Order number: **C9198 139**

The Champions of the Wild Collection: Series order number: **193C 9199 098**

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