

Klassic Koalas

Mr. Douglas' Koalas and the Stars of Qantas



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San Mateo, California

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Koalas: Zen in Fur

Acknowledgments

I would like to extend my special thanks to Marlene Satter; Mike Larder; Peter, Robert, and Diana Douglas; Alix McLean and Lucy Fraser of Lone Pine Sanctuary; Warwick Tainton and Colin Westwood of the Q.A.N.T.A.S. Founders Museum; and Anna-Lisa Palmer of Qantas Airlines.

Introduction

People have attributed human traits to koalas throughout history. When one thinks of a creature as being a "wild animal," teeth, claws, and danger often come to mind. Yet in the case of this mostly peaceful animal, "wild" applies more to its unique needs that must be respected, rendering it unsuitable as a pet, yet admirably suited to its native environment.

Koalas like quiet and solitude most of the time; they are nocturnal and only eat eucalyptus. They can experience stress easily, due to lack of a pronounced flight-or-fight response. In recent times, laws have been enacted to protect the koala from being held by individuals without professional supervision.

The images featured in this book come from the home of retired animal expert and caretaker Peter Douglas, who has looked after koalas over four decades. His love for these animals is apparent in all of the photographs. Special care was given to keep koalas safe during all photo shoots and not to cause them any stress. Formerly a lecturer at Queensland University, Mr. Douglas currently serves as Senior Vice President of The University of Queensland's Gatton's Past Students' Management Committee.

Son Robert has made a name for himself over the years as a conservationist of Tasmanian devils. Both father and son are often referred to as the "koala

men." Robert speaks of himself as the original "koala boy," having posed with koalas and all sorts of celebrities, including the Pope, ever since he can remember. A favorite koala chaperon in countless koala newspaper and magazine articles, he was also featured holding a baby Victorian koala in the books *Koalas: Moving Portraits of Serenity* and *Koalas: Zen in Fur*.

Most photographs were taken at Brisbane's Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary (www.koala.net) in the 1960s and 1970s, where a male albino koala named "Kalba," featured toward the end of this book, was brought in by a truck driver in 1971. The other three photos of albinos shown in earlier pages are of "Cuddles," a female who which found in the same area and brought to Lone Pine in the mid 1980's. One of Kalba's non-albino descendants was bequeathed to the San Diego Zoo, and its two much-celebrated albinos can now be traced back to a recessive gene coming from that one stray.

Qantas Airlines is perhaps the most recognizable business in Australia; the koala is the country's most popular icon. The popular *I hate Qantas* commercials originally featured a talking koala who sat in a eucalyptus tree while complaining about tourists disturbing its tranquil environment.

These advertisements were first created by the Cunningham & Walsh agency of San Francisco and aimed at an exclusively American audience. Running from 1967 until 1992 (and briefly reinstated around the time of the Australian Olympics in 1999), they became the longest television ad campaign in United

States history. The skits became more inventive over time—even featuring a sunglass-wearing koala sitting in a director's chair while expounding on the luxuries of first-class flying.

Displayed in this book are some of the best specimens of unusual Qantas koala advertisements from the 1960s through the 1980s. The original ads in addition to other examples, can now be enjoyed in person by visiting the Q.A.N.T.A.S. Founders Museum in Longreach, Queensland (www.qfm.com.au).

At over 75 years of age, with over 130 koalas, Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary is officially recognized by the famous Guinness World Records as the world's largest koala sanctuary. Located on the banks of the beautiful Brisbane River, Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary is an ideal destination nestled among mature trees, where visitors can appreciate many of the native wildlife wonders of Australia.

All photo arrangements were carefully supervised to avoid any stress to the animals. All photos featured in this book were taken on rare occasions, over the course of four decades, and I was assured that no animals were harmed in the making. Many people ponder the possibilities of owning a pet koala, but it needs to remain just that—a fantasy. This majestic creature is at home high up in the treetops, where it loves to revel in eucalyptus leaves and observe the world from a safe distance.



Build a better mousetrap and the world will beat a path to your door.
—*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

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Published by Koala Jo Publishing
San Mateo, Ca 94401, USA
www.koalajo.com



ISBN: 0-9764698-4-1