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QUEENSLAND KOALA NEWEST AUSSIE AMBASSADOR AT TAMPA'S LOWRY PARK ZOO

Zoo Guests Welcome Bundle of "Bundaleer"

TAMPA, Fla. (June 29, 2009) – The golden days of summer have brought a new Aussie ambassador – the Queensland koala – to Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo. "Bundaleer," a handsome 10-year-old male Queensland koala, makes his public debut this morning in a new koala exhibit within Wallaroo Station, the Zoo's 4.5-acre Australian-themed family area.

The addition of a koala habitat allows Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo the opportunity to safeguard this treasured species at "home" and also take an active role in conservation and environmental issues affecting the animal in its native region.

"We are very proud to not only have the opportunity to house Bundaleer here at Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo, but also to partner with the Zoological Society of San Diego to support habitat and conservation research in Australia through a cooperative program known as the Koala Reproduction and Population Ecology Project," said Dr. Larry Killmar, the Zoo's director of collections. "Exhibiting this very interesting marsupial will allow us to inform and educate our visiting public about the species, its environment and the adaptations this animal has developed to survive in its environment."

As Dr. Killmar noted, koalas are marsupials – *not bears*, which means they members of a group of pouched animals like kangaroos and wallabies. While incredibly endearing creatures, koalas spend the lazy days of summer (and the rest of the year) in a very relaxed way. Bundaleer will spend *up to 20 hours each day* sleeping or resting. This leaves about three hours for eating, and one hour for moving about or socializing. Like a sloth, koalas are very slow moving animals.

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The Queensland koala eats a strict diet of only eucalyptus leaves, which causes its metabolism to move slowly. Eucalyptus has toxic oil on the leaves that is poisonous to most animals. The koala has bacteria in its stomach that can break down these harmful oils; however, it takes much of a koala's energy to digest and eliminate the toxin. There are over 700 different species of eucalyptus trees and it is essential for koalas to eat a variety of them in order to absorb a healthy balance of nutrients.

In the wild, koalas reside in Scrubland and eucalyptus forests in Coastal regions of eastern and southern Australia. The koala was once hunted to near extinction, in fact between 1919 and 1924, an estimated eight million koalas were killed for their fur. Today, common causes of koala mortality include collisions with motor vehicles in the wild, domestic dogs, wild fires, disease and loss of habitat.

Bundaleer is the Zoo's first koala resident. Koalas are largely solitary (only socializing during the mating season), so for now, Bundaleer's zookeepers will meet his limited need for socialization. His preference for lower humidity than our climate typically offers will be met by offering an indoor, climate-controlled exhibit.

His unique journey to Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo began more than 2,000 miles away at the San Diego Zoo. He was transported from San Diego to Tampa by three human companions (zookeepers) courtesy of American Airlines – snuggled inside a crate resting on two passenger seats in the main cabin. Bundaleer is an experienced traveler, returning to the Sunshine State for the second time.

Zoo staff utilized [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) to help Bundaleer document his journey to Tampa. Bringing a koala to the Zoo sparked considerable interest from Zoo Annual Pass holders and guests, and his unconventional method of animal transportation as a commercial airline passenger presented a unique opportunity to interact with “fans” and “followers.”

About Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo

Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo is operated by the Lowry Park Zoological Society, an independent 501(c)(3) charitable organization committed to excellence in education, conservation and research. Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), and has been named the No. 1 zoo in America by both *Parents* magazine (2009) and *Child* magazine (2004). The Zoo is located at 1101 W. Sligh Avenue in Tampa, one mile west of I-275 (exit 48) and is open seven days a week, from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, with extended hours on select nights during the summer. Parking is free. Visit LowryParkZoo.com or call (813) 935-8552 for information. Also find us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

