

PERFECT POUCHES

Marsupials are known for carrying their young around in a pouch, but many other animals also have brood pouches for raising either their eggs or their young in.



JELLYBEAN JOEYS

A **KOALA** joey is only two centimetres long when it is born—the size of a jellybean. It is blind, furless and has no ears, but its strong forelimbs and claws help it crawl from the birth canal up into its mum's backward-facing pouch.

In the pouch, the joey latches onto a teat, which swells up inside its mouth so the baby doesn't fall out while its mum is clambering about in the treetops. When the joey is around six months old, its mum produces a poeey pap for her baby to feed on that helps it digest the toxic eucalyptus leaves koalas love to eat.



HOW PECULIAR!

✧ It's messy inside a **KOALA'S** pouch as, unlike other marsupials such as kangaroos, koala mums don't consume their babies' pee and poo.

✧ **QUOKKA** mums, dads and babies appear to be smiling as if for a family portrait, but their faces are just shaped that way.

✧ Thousands of **RED CRAB** larvae are eaten by the fish, manta rays and whale sharks that gather in the waters around Christmas Island every year.



QUOKKA EJECTION SEATS

A month after mating, the female **QUOKKA** gives birth to just one joey the size of a grain of rice. It makes its way into her pouch, where it attaches to her teat. The joey stays there safe and snug for about six months. Once it has developed fur, it peeks out of the pouch, nibbles on solid food and 'smiles' at tourists.

If a quokka mum with a well-developed baby feels threatened, she can relax the muscles in her pouch so her joey topples out. The ejected joey hisses, which distracts the predator, giving the mother—and hopefully her baby—a chance to escape.

CRAB CAVALCADES

When the wet season starts on Christmas Island, *millions* of **CHRISTMAS ISLAND RED CRABS** leave their burrows in the rainforest and head to the ocean. The males dig burrows in the sand, mate with the females and then go home. Three days after mating, each mother crab produces up to 100,000 eggs, which she keeps in a brood pouch in her abdomen for two weeks.

All the female crabs leave their seaside burrows at the same time, scuttle into the water, release their eggs and head back to the rainforest. The swirling clouds of red-crab larvae hatch as soon as they hit the water. Those that survive grow into prawn-like creatures, which quickly turn into juvenile crabs that march inland to join their mums and dads.

