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ENVIRONMENTAL

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DANIELLE CLODE is a biologist and award-winning natural history author. Her books include *Killers in Eden*, which was made into an award-winning ABC TV natural history documentary; *Voyage to the South Seas*, winner of the VPLA's non-fiction award; and *The Wasp and the Orchid*, which was shortlisted for National Biography award. Her most recent book is *In Search of the Woman who Sailed the World*.

Koala

A Life in Trees

Danielle Clode

Despite their iconic status, their celebrity and popularity, koalas remain something of a mystery. Inscrutable and paradoxical. They are often affectionate in captivity, seek out human assistance when in need of water or care, are beloved by millions – and yet they can also be fierce and belligerent, are plagued by sexually transmitted diseases and inbreeding, maligned for a lack of intelligence. They are neither bears nor soft toys, they are simultaneously threatened with extinction, yet dying from over-population. They are both a symbol of Australia's unique wildlife and emblematic of the devastation we have wrought on so many species. There is so much more to know about koalas than just a sweet face on a postcard – their history, evolution, biology, ecology, their interactions with humans and other predators, where they have come from and what their future holds. This book is their story.

Did you know?

- There used to be a giant koala that also lived in trees and was three times the size of the modern koala.
- Koalas can only eat the particular species of gum tree they were raised on as their gut bacteria can't digest other gum tree species.
- Koalas can taste the amount of toxins in leaves so they know which individual leaves are best to eat.
- Koalas probably use their big noses for smelling pheromones produced by other koalas, so they can tell when a tree already has a koala in it. This is why they rub noses with each other, or even with humans, when they come into contact.

For readers of Helen Macdonald, Robert Macfarlane, Tim Flannery, Tim Low, and Peter Wohlleben.