

My Sleepy Friend

- Sudha Shrotria

*The nostalgia of a wish rewarded,
A moment recounted,
Of elation and delight
At the fortuitous sight,
Of a dreamy eyed
Round headed cuddly
Australian pride.
Though looks may compare,
And an appeal it may share,
It is not a bear I can vouch,
For the mother has a pouch
To carry little joey,
Protect, feed and keep it cosy,
Till it learns the way the mother shows;
A black oval nose,
And big fluffy ears,
A lovable face,
An icon of a unique place,
A heart-melting look,
Irresistible even in a picture-book.
Thick woolly grey coat,
White fur on chest and throat,
Curiously shaped paws,
And long sharp claws
That assist in climbing with ease,
Atop the giant eucalyptus trees;
Where eating is the prime action
Followed by hours and hours of sleeping
In complete satisfaction.*

||

*'You are the lucky one,
To see the Koala in the wild,' said my host and
smiled.*



Photo: The Sleeping Koala

*'For its not easy to spot
A Koala in the first shot'.
'In my twenty years of forest life,' said he,
'I have seen the Koala only thrice up in the
tree'.
I craned my neck high to look towards the sky,
Where sifting through the branches
Of the dense leafy cover,
I chanced to discover
My delightful friend,
In perfect blend,
Perched on the bark
Of the favourite gum tree
In the National park.
I could see him nibbling non-stop,
The toxic leaves on the tree top.*

III

*This national icon of Aussie land
Is under threat from human hand?
Habitat-loss and cleared land,
Mounting drought
And intense summer heat.
For survival it must compete;
The forests fires, fuelled by strong winds
Left havoc behind;
In distress and despair
Shrieks of the dying filled the air;
And the few that survived
Face a gloomy syndrome
Having lost their home
And the terrain
In which they could freely roam.*

IV

*Pictures lurk in my mind,
Of injured Koalas
And other animals in the wild,
Sadly, thousands have died;
Grateful to the efforts paved
By wildlife warriors
And volunteers,
Some animals could be saved;
But they too could not come out unscathed
From the damage generated by the bushfire
rage;
Heart-breaking pictures of the injured,
A little joey with all limbs in bandage
Will continue to haunt me*

Till humanity finds the key

To live responsibly.



*Photo: Koala with Joey
Credit: [pexels.com/search/koala](https://www.pexels.com/search/koala)*



***The Author with the Koala** in the Lone Pine Sanctuary, Brisbane. The Koala spotted in the forest was too high-up in the Eucalyptus tree to be photographed by an ordinary lens.*

