

Grade 10 Unit 2 EA 2 Creating an Argument

Score: Exemplary

Cute, cuddly, and bearlike, koalas are a beloved animal around the world and in their native home of Australia. Sleeping for 18 hours each day, this relatively peaceful animal does not often leave the eucalyptus trees whose leaves it eats (Koala). Unfortunately, this adorable marsupial is in danger. According to National Geographic, the number of koalas has fallen from 430,000 to, at the lowest, 44,000 since 1990 (Jenkins). Most of this drastic change is due to urbanization. Killing off the koala will disrupt biodiversity, indirectly effecting everyone on earth. Although some actions are being taken to help keep koalas safe, more awareness and action is needed to save them.

According to savethekoalas.com, since European settlement, 80 percent of the eucalyptus trees koalas rely on for food and shelter have been cleared. Most of the 20 percent that has not been cleared for farms or buildings is on privately owned land and not protected (Land). Land clearing is a danger because “Koalas need a lot of space—about a hundred trees per animal—a pressing problem as Australia's woodlands continue to shrink” (Koala). Besides food and shelter, Koalas also depend on these trees as a place to meet other koalas as they are a social society (Land). As their homes are bulldozed, koalas become stressed which means they are less likely to reproduce and are more susceptible to diseases according to The Australian Koala Foundation (Land). One such disease is chlamydia. A common STD in humans, chlamydia in koalas can be fatal. According to koalaland.com, “The fact is that many koalas in the wild are living with Chlamydia (up to 70%). It is not until koalas become stressed and the koala's immune system is unable to fight the virus that Chlamydia becomes dangerous, and fatal” (Chlamydia). With stress due to their decreased habitat, koalas are more likely to die from the virus. Along with tree loss, city's taking over a koala's home also means increased risk for koalas of being hit by cars, killed by dogs or drowning in swimming pools according the Queensland Government Department of Environmental and Heritage Protection (Koala Threats). It's not just deforestation that is impacting eucalyptus trees. Carbon dioxide level elevation in the air “will reduce the

nutritional quality of Eucalyptus leaves, causing nutrient shortages in the species that forage on them” according to Keep the Koala (Negative).

Depletion of koala populations and habitats has a negative effect on biodiversity. Biodiversity refers to the abundance of different animal and plant species on earth. According to Global Issues, “The number of species of plants, animals, and microorganisms, the enormous diversity of genes in these species, the different ecosystems on the planet, such as deserts, rainforests and coral reefs are all part of a biologically diverse Earth” (Anup). Biodiversity is important because all life on earth is interconnected. With the deforestation of koala habitats and the subsequent demise of many koalas, the delicate balance of life on earth is being disrupted. Biodiversity “ensures natural sustainability for all life forms,” said Global Issues (Anup). When ecosystems are healthy, they are better able to withstand natural disasters which impact both animals such as koalas and humans (Anup). A healthy ecosystem protects water sources, eliminates carbon emissions through photosynthesis, helps maintain climate stability, and provides resources both for today and in the future according to Global Issues (Anup). But when animals, such as the koala are dying off, an ecosystem is not healthy and cannot provide these benefits wholly. Besides impacting biodiversity, koala deaths also impact the cultures of humans, particularly around Australia. Imagine a world where children have never seen a koala. Images, art, and stories all contain references to koalas which would be confusing to the next generation if all koalas were to become extinct. The economy would also be effected if koalas died and koala related tourism came to an end. According to a study by Professor Tor Hundloe and Doctor Clive Hamilton, the “best estimate of the contribution of koalas to the Australian tourism industry and thus the Australian economy is \$1.1 billion. This translates into around 9,000 jobs directly accounted for by koalas” (Hamilton, Hundloe). Without this money and jobs, the economy of Australia and its trading partners around the world would be negatively impacted. Even if koala’s deaths did not have such a wide impact on humans, it is still our responsibility as global citizens to protect them.

What can be done to help protect the koalas? In the case of another dispute over habitat on the Columbia River between Oregon and Washington, sea lions fought to live in the same area as the endangered wild salmon. According to Bill Hewitt, a plan is in

place to remove the sea lions from the area, hopefully to zoos or aquariums, but they potentially could be euthanatized “or shot if they eluded capture” (Hewitt 350). But enacting this tactic of removing the threat to the koala’s habitat, in this case humans, by death if necessary is certainly out of the question. However, planting eucalyptus trees to provide a home for koalas within urban areas and donating money towards organizations such as The Australian Koala Foundation is possible and already occurring to a certain extent. Spreading awareness about the koala’s plight and what people can do to help is important. In Australia, the simple acts of locking up dogs at night, covering swimming pools when they are not in use, and slowing down to scout for koalas when driving can save their lives (Koala Threats). Although currently listed as a vulnerable species across Australia as of April, 2012, a specialist recommend that the koala’s status be updated to critically endangered according to The Australian Koala Foundation (The Koala). More international education about the koala’s fate could motivate international support towards the save the koalas movement. What the cause really needs however, is a leader who can reach a large audience, perhaps through a written work, such as the great muckraking journalist, Upton Sinclair did in his novel, *The Jungle* which he used to advocate for worker’s rights. Sinclair’s use of harsh visual images describing the worker’s working conditions, such as “a man had fallen into one of the rendering tanks and had been made into pure leaf lard” (Sinclair 122), compelled change in working conditions and meat packing regulations. If such a person were to step up in the fight for koala’s habitats, it would significantly increase the scope of those aware of the problems koalas face. Although some legislation is already in place to protect Koalas, The Australian Koala Foundation said there is not adequate enforcement of the legislation which makes it relatively useless. A leader like Sinclair could have pressure political leaders to enforce the legislation.

Koalas and their habitat are at risk and need to be protected. As the number of koala deaths increase, biodiversity, culture, and the economy will be negatively impacted. Spreading awareness, donating funds, and pressuring the enforcement of legislation designed to keep koalas safe can all help this beloved animal survive.

Works Cited

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Annotation:

This Exemplary argumentative essay is characterized by sophisticated reasoning and development of ideas focused on an issue about which the writer is clearly passionate and well-informed. The exemplar presents a clear claim about the importance of protecting koalas and develops this idea by arguing against the destruction of habitat, the importance of koalas and their habitat to biodiversity, and the economic effects of the loss of a tourism attraction. This complex and careful development of the argument is accompanied by an equally compelling and subtle counterclaim about the difficulty of protecting koalas from human incursion and the minor adjustments that are being made to protect koalas that is refuted by the claim that more must be done. The argument is developed skillfully using analogous circumstances such as the sea lion issue and the need for a muckraker such as Upton Sinclair. The structure is solid and ambitious, characterized by the effective use of textual evidence from multiple sources. Careful attention to transitional topic and concluding sentences enhances the cohesiveness of the argument. The progression of ideas is sophisticated and logical while also appealing to the ethical claim that protecting koalas is “still our responsibility as global citizens.” Intentional and skillful use of elevated diction and sophisticated syntax as well as smooth integration of textual evidence from multiple sources, correctly cited, furthers this excellent exemplar of a convincing and compelling argument.