

A-Z

OF

AUSTRALIAN ANIMALS



JENNIFER COSSINS

TEACHERS' NOTES

A-Z OF AUSTRALIAN ANIMALS

BY JENNIFER COSSINS

TEACHERS' NOTES BY ROBYN SHEAHAN-BRIGHT

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INTRODUCTION

'Australia is home to an amazing range of unique and unusual animals. As one of the world's largest countries by land mass, we have a wide variety of ecosystems: deserts, tropical forests, coastline, reefs, swamps, forests and mountains. Having so many types of habitat has allowed a huge diversity of plant and animal life to evolve.'

Jennifer Cossins, 'Introduction' to *A to Z of Australian Animals*

This book follows the success of Cossins' brilliant *A-Z of Endangered Animals*. In this text she details twenty-six Australian animals, many of which are lesser-known, and some of which are endangered. She outlines their main features and includes an interesting fact about each one of them. Her vibrant illustrations enhance the text and will encourage students to explore and to identify these creatures in their natural environment. Cossins' work is visually detailed and her research is similarly focused.

This book offers a tantalising overview of some of the fascinating features of Australia's extremely diverse wildlife, which will encourage readers to explore even more widely.



THEMES & CURRICULUM TOPICS

Several themes and curriculum topics (for primary school students) are covered in this book which might be related to:

'**Australian Curriculum**' < <https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au>>

- **SCIENCE**

Australian Animals

ACTIVITY: Investigate different Australian species. Refer to the **Bibliography** of books, films and websites attached to these Teachers Notes to research this topic further.

ACTIVITY: Create a slogan and a poster aimed at educating the public about a particular Australian animal.

ACTIVITY: Make an alphabetical list of any animals (mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, arthropods, fish, molluscs, or echinoderms) not included in this text and research them further. For example, there are no snakes in this alphabet. Reptiles are also an area to research further, e.g. sea turtles or crocodiles. [See **Blackline Master 2.**]

ACTIVITY: Study other alphabets of Australian animals and compare them to this one. [See **Bibliography.**]

ACTIVITY: Quiz students regarding the scientific names of some of these animals, e.g. What is an *Ornithorhynchus anatinus*? Answer: A platypus. [See also **Blackline Masters 4 & 5.**]

ACTIVITY: Make a list of animals which have become extinct and research them further. What were the causes of their extinction?

ACTIVITY: What Australian animals are endangered?

The Life Cycles and Habitats of Australian Animals

ACTIVITY: Study **metamorphosis**, and how some animals change during their maturation cycles, e.g. caterpillars/butterflies.

ACTIVITY: Study how Australian animals employ a range of **survival skills** in order to avoid predators, or as predators themselves.

ACTIVITY: One such survival skill is to **camouflage** themselves in their habitats, which enhances the prospects of an animal surviving, e.g. frillneck lizards, numbats. There are four main types of camouflage: Concealing Coloration, Disruptive Coloration, Disguise and Mimicry. [See 'Animal Camouflage: Pictures and Information for Kids' K5 Computer Lab <<http://oakdome.com/k5/lesson-plans/powerpoint/animal-camouflage-pictures-and-information.php>>] Research this topic further. Apply what you have learned to your observation of several Australian animals.

ACTIVITY: Research the other **special skills** which animals develop for finding food, protecting their territories and surviving harsh conditions, such as super eyesight. Some animals have '**secret weapons**', such as the cassowary, which has a dagger-like middle toe that can grow to around 12–13 centimetres) or the echidna, which has a long tongue – up to 18 centimetres – that darts out to catch ants and termites with sticky saliva. Some can **travel incredible distances and speeds**, e.g. red kangaroos can hop at speeds of over 60 kilometres per hour and sugar gliders can glide up to 45 metres in one leap. Research such skills.

ACTIVITY: Some animals have **defining features**, e.g. the little pygmy possum's tail can support its entire body weight. 'Platypuses use neither sight, sound nor smell to hunt. Instead, their primary sensory organ is their duck-like bill, which has electroreceptors that detect electrical currents caused by the movement of their prey, and pressure-sensitive receptors.' Research these unusual creatures further. Apply what you have learned to your observation of several other Australian animals.

ACTIVITY: Animals often make **distinctive sounds**. Sometimes these sounds are mating calls, or warnings to other predators, or simply express fear. Encourage students to watch and listen to YouTube videos of animal sounds and discuss those made by various animals. 'Our Wildlife Sound Archive' CSIRO <<https://www.csiro.au/en/Research/Collections/ANWC/About-ANWC/Our-wildlife-sound-archive>> [See **Bibliography**.]

ACTIVITY: Adaptation is evident in many animals, e.g. 'Wombats have backward pouches to protect their joeys from dirt when digging burrows.' Research adaptation in Australian animals.

Marsupials

ACTIVITY: Make a list of Australian marsupials, e.g. kangaroos, koalas, wallabies, little pygmy possums and numbats. Research each of these creatures further.

ACTIVITY: Bilbies are one of Australia's marsupials. 'There once were two species of bilby in Australia: the lesser bilby and the greater bilby. Both habitat loss and competition from introduced species have led to the extinction of the lesser bilby.' Research this endangered animal more closely.

ACTIVITY: Research other types of bandicoots.

ACTIVITY: Research the various types of quolls.

- **STUDY OF SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT**

Climate Change Debate

ACTIVITY: Many people believe that human beings have created 'climate change' which has an enormously detrimental impact on biodiversity. There are also many climate change 'deniers'. Research this debate and write an essay outlining your findings.

ACTIVITY: Research the decline or endangered status of any Australian species and what scientists say about the impact of climate change or pollution on that animal.

ACTIVITY: The Climate Change Authority <<http://climatechangeauthority.gov.au/>> provides independent expert advice on Australian Government climate change mitigation initiatives. The Climate Coalition <<http://www.theclimatecoalition.org/>> is a British group dedicated to action on climate change. Should all governments be allocating funds to combating climate change?

Protection of Wildlife and Moral Issues

ACTIVITY: Some animals are considered dangerous because they inject venom or other poisons into their victims or spread disease (e.g. flying foxes). Research this topic further. Should we kill or remove such animals from their habitat simply because they pose a threat to human life?

ACTIVITY: Some native animals (such as dingoes, kangaroos or possums) are sometimes considered pests, by humans despite their treasured status. How do we balance the importance of a native animal in our ecosystem with their impact on our livestock, roads, homes or other infrastructure?

Values

DISCUSSION POINT: Discuss the key values conveyed in this text.

- **ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

The text of this book might be studied in relation to the following aspects:

ACTIVITY: The entries on each creature are written in third person, as an expository text. Invite students to write an expository text about any other animal which doesn't feature in this book; assign a different letter of the alphabet to each student. There are different types of expository writing e.g. descriptive, sequential, cause/effect etc. [See **Bibliography** for examples of such texts.] [See also **Visual Literacy** exercise below.] [See also **Blackline Master 2** below.]

ACTIVITY: Test your students' comprehension by asking them questions about the written text. [See also **Blackline Masters 4 & 5.**]

ACTIVITY: Invite students to write an acrostic poem using the letters in 'Echidna'. [See **Bibliography.**]

ACTIVITY: Write a lyrical poem about an animal using models written by published poets to encourage students' expression. [See **Bibliography.**]

ACTIVITY: Read A. B. (Banjo) Paterson's poem 'Old Man Platypus', Australian Poetry Library <<https://www.poetrylibrary.edu.au/poets/paterson-a-b-banjo/old-man-platypus-0023005>>. Discuss its rhyming scheme and shape with students. Discuss Paterson's use of devices such as alliteration, personification, metaphor, simile and rhyme. Then encourage them to write in a similar style about another Australian animal.

ACTIVITY: Aboriginal people have sung about, painted, and told stories about animals for thousands of years. Read some in published picture books and discuss the animal facts revealed in these stories. [See **Bibliography.**]

ACTIVITY: Discover the collective nouns for some of the animals in this book for example, a mob of kangaroos. [See **Blackline Master 7.**]

Activity: Invite students to write a simple story as the basis for a picture book about a favourite Australian animal.

- **VISUAL LITERACY**

The visual text in this book combines with the written text to illustrate features of the various animals described.

ACTIVITY: The **cover** of the book depicts a little pygmy possum on a branch. What does this cover suggest to you about the book's content and emotional impact?

ACTIVITY: The half-title and **title pages** are without images. Draw an appropriate image to adorn either page.

DISCUSSION POINT: The **format** of the book is standardised with an image opposite an expository text. Create your expository text [See **English Language and Literacy** exercise above] as a text box inside a full illustrated double page spread which 'bleeds' to the edge of the pages rather than in the format used in this book. Depict the animal in its natural environment or landscape. Make a display of the texts and images created by each student. Copy them and make them into a class alphabet book.

ACTIVITY: The **medium** employed is digital art. Jennifer draws on a Wacom Cintiq, starting with a simple line sketch drawn from looking at photographs then slowly adding detail and **colour**, effectively foregrounded on stark white backgrounds. Invite students to create a portrait of one of the Australian animals they've researched in this medium and colour palette.

ACTIVITY: Create a collage image of an emu. [See **Blackline Master 1** below.]

ACTIVITY: Students might be encouraged to use critical literacy skills to unearth further meaning in this text. Encourage them to look closely at the images, to explain what they see, and then what the text says, and how the two texts add meaning to each other. [See also **Blackline Master 3.**]

ACTIVITY: Invite students to illustrate the animal story they wrote under **English Language and Literacy** above. [Discuss the conventions of the picture book story format before embarking on this exercise.]

- **CREATIVE ARTS**

There are many creative activities suggested by this text:

1. **CRAFT:** Make a **model** of any of the animals included in this text, e.g. a quokka. [See **Bibliography.**]

2. **CRAFT:** Create an **Australian animals mobile**. [See **Blackline Master 6**.]
[See **Bibliography**.]

3. **CRAFT:** Create a mask of an **Australian animal**. [See **Bibliography**.]

4. **MUSIC:** Discover **simple songs** about any of the Australian animals in this book and share them with the class. To begin this activity, watch such videos as:

'Australian Animal Dance Songs Kids Kindergarten Preschoolers Exercise Music Song', YouTube November 2, 2011

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2lym1A3RDw>>

'Kookaburra Song', YouTube, July 25, 2015

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p2VitpGRalw>>

'Australian Animal Alphabet' YouTube, November 26, 2018

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39Etm6s1Nho>>

Spencer, Don, 'Please Don't Call Me a Koala Bear', YouTube, January 15, 2013

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fB2y52jfRdc>>

Spencer, Don, *Australian Animal Songs*, 1988. Available:

<<https://itunes.apple.com/au/album/australian-animal-songs/1082248624>>

Then invite students to write and perform their own songs.

5. **CRAFT:** Create a diorama depicting a platypus in its habitat. [See **Bibliography** for relevant resources.]

6. **SCRIPT:** Create a book trailer to promote this book. [See **Bibliography** for relevant resources.]

- **LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES**

ACTIVITY: Research topics suggested in these notes online.

- **MATHEMATICS**

ACTIVITY: Have fun discovering mathematical facts about these animals.

FURTHER TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

- Research the work of Jennifer Cossins.
- Students might research this book in comparison to picture books and non-fiction books such as those listed in the **Bibliography**.
- Investigate any other topic suggested by this text.

CONCLUSION

This beautifully designed and illustrated non-fiction text will find its place, like Cossins' *A-Z of Endangered Animals*, in any classroom. It will encourage creative research into Australia's rich biodiversity and its origins, and will teach students to observe and to protect wildlife. It offers a richly creative approach to environmental studies that is entertaining as much as it is informative.

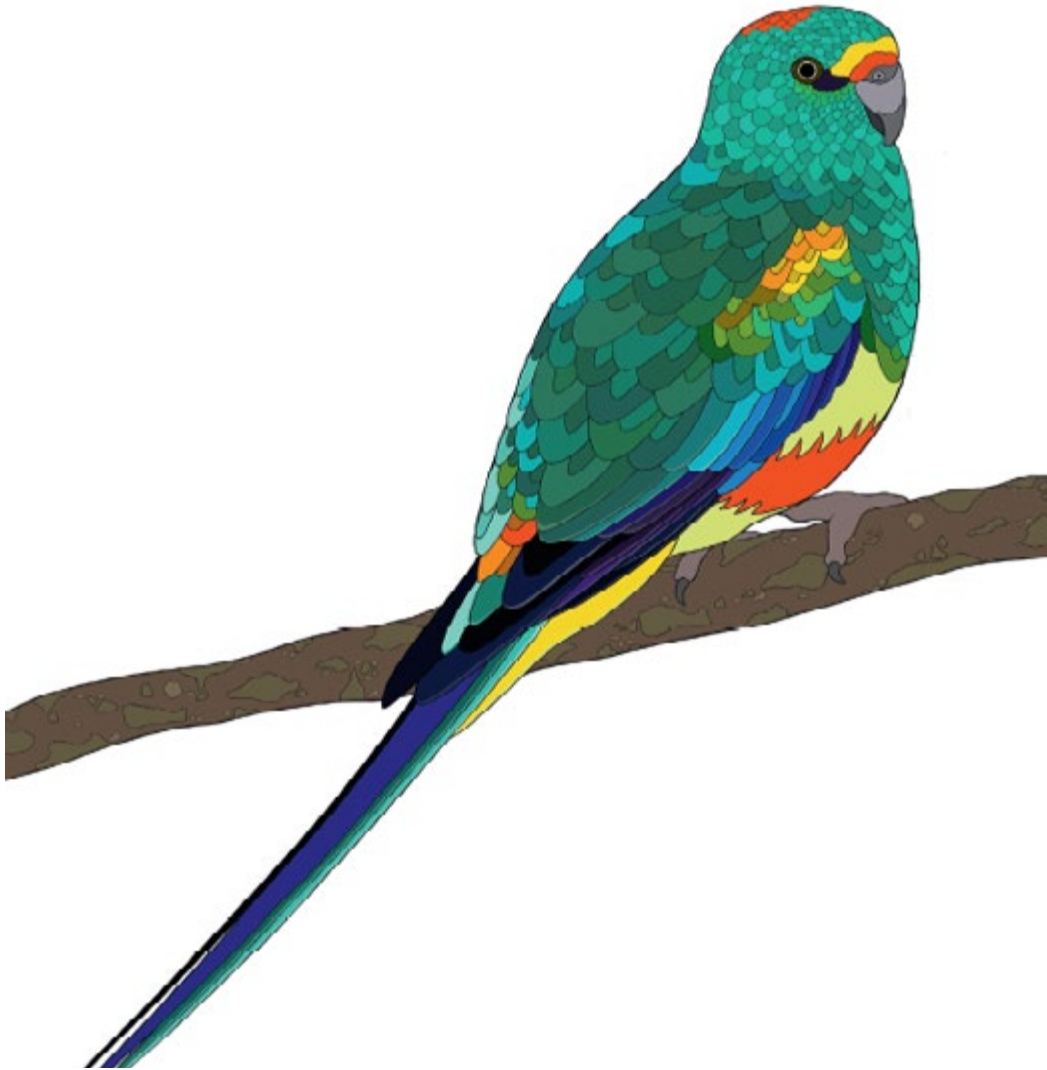
ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR

Jennifer Cossins is a Tasmanian artist and writer with a passion for nature, the animal kingdom and all things bright and colourful. A born and bred Tasmanian, Jennifer also designs homewares, textiles and stationery, which she stocks in her store, Red Parka, in Hobart, Tasmania. <<http://redparka.com.au>>

Jennifer's other books include *The Baby Animal Book*, *101 Collective Nouns* and *A-Z of Endangered Animals*, which was a CBCA Honour Book in 2017.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE NOTES

Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright operates justified text writing and publishing consultancy services, and is widely published on children's literature, publishing history and Australian fiction. In 2011 she was the recipient of the CBCA (Qld Branch) Dame Annabelle Rankin Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Queensland, and in 2012 the CBCA (National) Nan Chauncy Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Australia, and in 2014, the QWC's Johnno Award.



BLACKLINE MASTERS

BM 1 CREATE A COLLAGE OF AN EMU

Enlarge this image to A3 on a photocopier and then encourage students to use a range of detailed materials, colour and texture to make a collage and achieve an adorable yet vibrant effect, like the artwork in *A-Z of Australian Animals*.



Image from: '50+ Australian Animal Template Shapes, Crafts & Colouring Pages' <<https://www.template.net/design-templates/animal-templates/australian-animal-template/>>

BM 2 MAKE YOUR OWN ALPHABET OF AUSTRALIAN ANIMALS

Fill in the names of animals which don't appear in this book and then write one 'interesting fact' beside it. (Enlarge this sheet to A3 on a copier to give you more space.)

	Australian Animal	Interesting Fact
A		
B		
C		
D		
E	e.g. Emu	
F		
G		
H		
I		
J		
K		
L		
M		
N		
O		
P		
Q		
R		
S		
T		
U		
V		
W		
X		
Y		
Z		

BM 3 NAME THIS AUSTRALIAN ANIMAL



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.



7.



8.



9.

Answers: 1. platypus. 2. koala. 3. kangaroo. 4. emu. 5. dingo. 6. echidna. 7. wombat. 8. galah. 9. frillneck lizard.

BM 4 AUSTRALIAN ANIMALS (GENERAL) QUIZ

1. Why did Australia **develop** such a wide diversity of wildlife?
2. Why has Australia **maintained** such a wide diversity of wildlife?
3. What is the difference between native animals of Australia and those which are endemic to Australia?
4. Australia is especially well known for marsupials. A marsupial is a mammal that . . . [finish the sentence].
5. Complete this sentence: 'Some famous marsupials are...'
6. What distinguishes the echidna and the platypus from other mammals throughout the world?
7. Complete this sentence: 'Australia is especially well known for...'
8. How many bird species do we have in Australia?
9. How many species of parrot call Australia home?
10. How many species of honeyeater do Australia and New Guinea have?

Answers: 1. 'As one of the world's largest countries by land mass, we have a wide variety of ecosystems: deserts, tropical forests, coastline, reefs, swamps, forests and mountains. Having so many types of habitat has allowed a huge diversity of plant and animal life to develop.' 2. 'Australia (along with New Guinea) has been isolated from much of the rest of the world since it split from the supercontinent Gondwana and began to drift north about 45 million years ago. At this time, the global climate was cooling and the world suffered from a loss of animal diversity. But in Australia, the drift north meant that our climate stayed about the same and our diversity was maintained. In addition, the isolation created an environment in which our animals evolved without impact from other continents.' 3. Both occur here naturally but those which are 'endemic' don't appear anywhere else in the world. 4. . . . raises its young in a pouch. 5. '. . . kangaroos, koalas and wallabies.' 6. They are the only egg-laying mammals, or 'monotremes', in the world. 7. '. . . marsupials.' 8. Over 800 bird species. 9. 56. 10. 187.

BM 5 AUSTRALIAN ANIMALS (SPECIFIC) QUIZ

Each question relates to the 26 animals in this book:

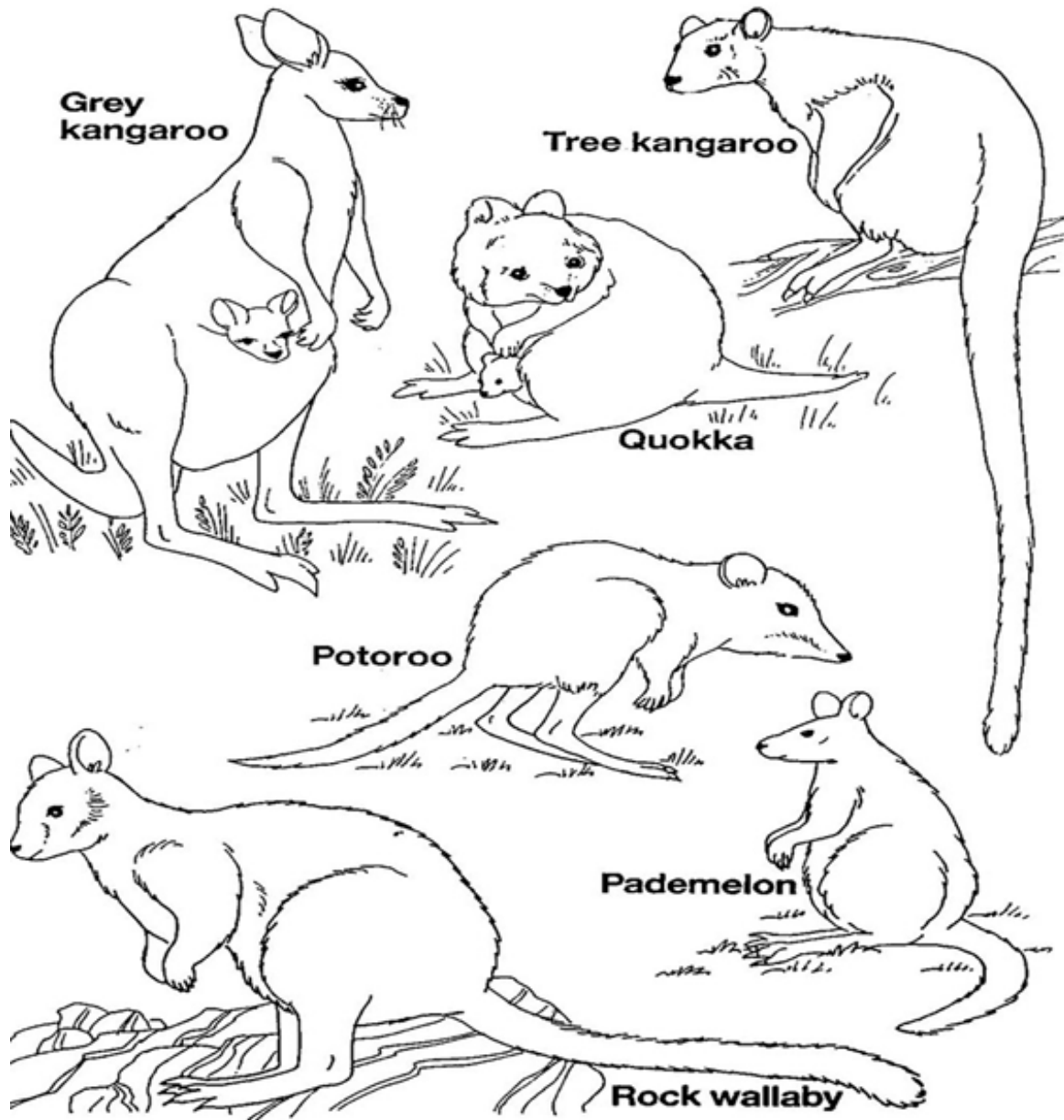
- A. Where do azure kingfishers build their nests?
- B. Complete this sentence: 'The bilby's iconic big ears make it a popular Australian alternative to the ...'
- C. Fill in the missing word: 'The cassowary is Australia's ... bird.'
- D. Why do some dispute calling a dingo a native Australian animal?
- E. What is a baby echidna called?
- F. How is the gender of a frillneck lizard determined?
- G. The galah or rose-breasted cockatoo is one of the best loved of our parrots. What do we mean when we call a person a 'galah'?
- H. What other name is sometimes applied to a hooded plover?
- I. What interesting fact did you learn about the imperial jezebel (butterfly)?
- J. What is a jabiru?
- K. The koala survives on eating eucalyptus leaves. Complete this sentence: 'Because eucalypts have a high moisture content they rarely need to ...'
- L. Fill in the missing word: 'The little pygmy possum is the world's ... possum.'
- M. From what does the mulga parrot derive its name?
- N. What is a numbat sometimes called?
- O. Complete this sentence: 'Orange-bellied parrots take a break in their migration to snack on beach vegetation on ...'
- P. Complete this sentence: 'Platypuses use neither sight, sound nor smell to hunt. Instead their primary sensory organ is their ...'
- Q. Fill in the missing word: 'The quokka is one of the smallest species of ...'
- R. Complete this sentence: 'The red kangaroo is the largest of all ... and Australia's largest ...'
- S. Fill in the missing word: Sugar gliders have 'A soft furry membrane called a ... on each side of their bodies [which] which allows them to glide.'
- T. What disease threatens the Tasmanian Devil?
- U. Why does the unadorned rock wallaby produce two types of milk?
- V. What interesting fact did you learn about the variegated fairy-wren?
- W. Why are wombats famous for their poo?
- X. *Xanthotis macleayanus* is better known as ...?
- Y. Complete this sentence: 'Yellow-tailed black cockatoo chicks are born with ...'
- Z. What interesting fact did you learn about the zebra finch?

Answers:

A. In burrows in river or lake banks. B. '... Easter Bunny.' C. '...heaviest...'
D. Because dingoes are thought to have descended from the South Asian grey wolf and were only introduced to Australia by Asian seafarers more than 4000 years ago, albeit long before European settlement. E. A puggle. F. 'The gender of frillneck lizards is determined by the temperature of the nest, with a hotter nest producing more females.' G. We are describing them in colloquial language as a foolish or silly person. H. A hooded dotteral. I. Imperial jezebel caterpillars eat their own eggshells after they are born. J. The only native Australian stork. K. '... drink water.' L. '... smallest ...'
M. 'They are often found in mulga trees, hence their name, but they also nest in many other trees.' N. The banded anteater. O. '... King Island.'
P. 'duck-like bill.' Q. '... wallaby.' R. '... kangaroo species'; '... native land mammal.' S. '... patagium.' T. Devil Facial Tumour Disease. U. One for babies and one for older offspring. V. 'Male wrens pick yellow petals and display them to attract a female.'
W. It is cube-shaped and the driest of any mammal. X. Macleay's honeyeater. Y. '... pink beaks that turn grey after about three months.' Z. 'Zebra finches can breed from around 75 days old, making them the world's fastest maturing bird.'

BM 6 AUSTRALIAN ANIMALS MOBILE

Enlarge this sheet to A3 and stick to craft paper. Invite students to cut out the animals, and then attach to fishing line and hang from a straw, a metal hanger, or an embroidery hoop to create an Australian animals mobile. [See 'How to make a Mobile', Wikihow <<http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Mobile>>]



Images from: '50+ Australian Animal Template Shapes, Crafts & Colouring Pages' <<https://www.template.net/design-templates/animal-templates/australian-animal-template/>>

BM 7 AUSTRALIAN ANIMALS COLLECTIVE NOUNS

1. A of crocodiles.



2. A of wombats.



3. A of echidnas.



4. A of black swans.



5. A of platypuses.



6. A of cockatoos.



7. A of koalas.



8. A of kookaburras.



9. A of magpies.



10. A of emus.



Answers: 1. bask. 2. wisdom. 3. parade. 4. wedge. 5. paddle. 6. crackle. 7. colony. 8. riot. 9. tiding. 10. mob.

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Tree-kangaroos and Wallabies

Emus and Cassowaries

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