

30 Amazing Australian Animals

FORWARD

Why amazing creatures?

Most countries around the world like to think that their animals are *amazing* but we Australians really do have the most amazing animals ... we've got mammals that don't lay eggs and mammals that give birth to young that look like pink jelly beans. But it is not just our mammals that are amazing. We have birds that have wings but don't fly, frogs that can survive in the desert right through years of drought, and miniature dragons that swim in the sea. We have insects whose young grow buried under the ground, coming to the surface maybe 7 years later, and, of course we have the eight legged wonder with a rather toxic bite. You'll meet each of these in these pages.

And because Australia is an island continent, isolated from other land masses for such a long time, most of our animals are found naturally nowhere else. We are home to the world's largest and most diverse range of marsupials, and to the largest carnivorous marsupial and the largest macropod. It is the only place where venomous snakes outnumber the non-venomous species. There are more lizards here than known anywhere else. And Australia has a wide diversity of environments, from alpine to desert, in which Australia's fauna has evolved their own solutions for survival.

Our fragile land

These amazing creatures have been surviving in this land that we call Australia for thousands and thousands of years. Unfortunately they have one huge problem ... introduced animals: cats and dogs, pigs, cane toads, fire ants and not to mention you and me.

Australia's landscape is very fragile. Many of the introduced animals cause destruction of the natural environment. Their feet are often not designed for our fragile soils, and they may even eat our native animals or the food our natives rely on. And we humans have spread our footprints on the land destroying native habitats to make way for our buildings, roads, railways and farms.

What we can do

We need to find a balance where both humans and other animals can survive. Here are some simple things we all can do:

- Keep your pets well enclosed and under control so that they do not wander and compete with native animals for the limited food resources or even eat our native animals.
- Conserve our natural resources by using as little as you can of things like water, electricity, gas and paper. And don't forget to recycle!
- Investigate ways we can help our native animals survive, such as by supporting and encouraging organisations that protect our native animals.
- Find out as much as you can about our native animals and tell others about how special they are. Be an ambassador!

If only previous generations had really considered the native animal population before hunting the Thylacine to extinction. Then maybe you could actually see a living Thylacine – instead of reading about its *amazingness* in this book.

So, turn the pages, check out our amazing animals and maybe consider what you can do to help our amazing animals continue to survive and flourish in this amazing land.

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