



AUSTRALIAN ANIMALS

Alex's favourite fast facts

(including one animal thought to be a joke!)

- ➔ More than 80 per cent of Australia's plants, mammals, reptiles and frogs are said to be unique to Australia! For example, we have more than 378 native mammal species!
- ➔ There aren't any native Australian animals that have hooves. That's interesting!
- ➔ Kangaroos and emus cannot easily walk backwards. They are part of Australia's Coat of Arms to symbolise that Australia is moving forward and not backward.
- ➔ Australia's big Western grey kangaroos are sometimes called 'stinkers' because the males have a strong body odour! A kangaroo with BO? Hmm ...
- ➔ Kangaroos are only about one centimetre long when born. That's pretty small!
- ➔ People can confuse wallabies and kangaroos. While they do look alike, wallabies are smaller and there are other differences. Interestingly, wallabies can sit with their tail stretched out in front of them! They have been seen sitting this way (while asleep), leaning against a rock or tree! That's so cool!
- ➔ Wombats are said to have large brains but tiny eyes and poor vision. They do have excellent hearing and smell. Wombats are solid, heavy and powerful animals that can be destructive to the environment. They have been nicknamed the 'bush bulldozer'.
- ➔ When wombats feel threatened, they make a loud hissing sound and kick out with their back legs like a horse. Then, they dive headfirst into their burrow, leaving their big bottom sticking out. Wombats thick fur and the skin on their bottoms are extremely tough, so it provides good protection from predators!
- ➔ Have you ever seen wombat poo? Incredibly, wombat poo consists of small cubes, (not round). Wombat poo doesn't fall off rocks but stays on the top. to mark out their territory and to communicate with other wombats!
- ➔ Echidnas are pretty 'mixed-up' little animals. They have spines like a porcupine, a beak similar to a bird, a pouch like a quoll and it lays eggs like a reptile!
- ➔ Echidnas slurp up 'yummy' ants, worms and insect larvae with their tongue, which can be up to 15 centimetres long. They have claws on their hind limbs that are curved backwards. This helps them dig for food.





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- ➔ Interestingly, when it comes to feeding their young on milk, Echidnas don't have any teats. Baby echidnas (called 'Puggles') simply lick-up the milk that oozes out of little patches on the mothers' skin, inside her pouch!
- ➔ Australia's very unusual platypus has a long, thin body covered in fur, a large bill and a broad flat tail. It has short limbs and webbed feet so it can swim quickly and easily through water. The platypus is a 'monotreme' because it is a mammal, but lays eggs instead of giving birth to live young. Male platypus have a venomous spur on the back of one foot that can cause humans (and predators) a lot of pain.
- ➔ The platypus looks so unusual that when early scientists saw one, they thought it was some kind of joke!
- ➔ The emu is Australia's largest bird that doesn't fly. They can be 2 metres in height and are omnivorous (they eat meat and plants). Emus can run up to 30kms an hour. That's pretty speedy! They have small wings which they flap when running, using them for balance and when quickly changing direction.
- ➔ Female emus lay their eggs, but it's the male emu that sits on the eggs and protects them until they hatch.
- ➔ Emus will eat small stones to help them digest their food!
- ➔ Koalas are often referred to as 'Koala bears', but officially, they are not bears!
- ➔ Koalas eat up to 1.3 kilograms of eucalyptus leaves a day. These leaves are quite toxic but koala's can easily digest them. However, this digestive process is very tiring for koalas so they spend a lot of time sleeping!
- ➔ Dingoes are Australia's largest carnivorous (meat-eating) mammal and they often live in groups (or packs). They don't bark and they have good night vision.
- ➔ Something really unusual about dingoes is that they can swivel their heads about 180 degrees so they can quickly see any approaching predators. They also have flexible wrists that rotate! This helps them dig for food around trees, and much more! How unusual is that?
- ➔ Tasmanian devils have large heads and necks that make up about 25 percent of their bodies. They have incredibly powerful bites, enabling them to bite through bone and metal; often breaking into caged animals for food.





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References

- Hello Sydney Kids: <https://www.hellosydneykids.com.au/australia-fun-facts/>
- 20 facts about Australian Animals: <https://www.absolutely-australia.com.au/about-australia/australian-wildlife/20-facts-about-australian-animals/>
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