



# OBSERVING AUSTRALIAN ANIMALS



Observing animals from Australia at the zoo

## GRADES 4-5

### KEY WORDS

- marsupial
- joey
- monotreme
- placental
- pouch
- pounds
- inches

### STANDARDS

- SCI.4.3.1
- SCI.4.3.3

### OBJECTIVES

- Students will be able to identify an animal from Australia and list detailed information about that animal based on their zoo observations.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- Monotremes are a group of mammals found only in Australia. The duck-billed platypus and the echidna are the only living monotremes. Unlike other mammals, monotremes lay eggs, which are then incubated by the mother.
- Marsupials make up the largest group of Australian mammals. Kangaroos, koalas, wombats, and Tasmanian devils are just a few -- more than 100 types of marsupials are found in Australia. Marsupials are born in a highly underdeveloped state after a short gestation (pregnancy). The tiny, blind baby (about the size of a bean) must travel on its own from the womb to the pouch. This perilous journey takes only a few minutes as the baby pulls itself across the mother's fur to the pouch. Once inside the pouch, the baby attaches to a teat (nipple) and begins to nurse. After a few months, the baby may get its first glimpse of the world by peeking out from the pouch. Gradually, the youngster, called a joey, ventures from the pouch more and more, eventually leaving for good after a year or more.
- Kangaroos come in many different shapes and sizes. Three examples of kangaroos are Doria's tree kangaroo, the Western gray kangaroo, and the red kangaroo. Inhabiting every niche, they include wallabies, pademelons, wallaroos, and tree kangaroos.
- What about other mammals? Placental mammals -- the kind whose young are nourished by the placenta as they grow in the womb and are then born alive in a well-developed state -- are few in Australia. Rats, mice, and bats are the only native placental mammals. Other introduced species, like dingoes, cats, rabbits, sheep, and camels, are also placental.
- Aside from marsupials, Australia is best known for its 730 species of birds, many of which are colorful parrots. Green and yellow budgerigars (parakeets) form huge flocks of 10,000 to 20,000 birds. Magnificent cockatoos and galahs are also common. They are well-known as pets and for their ability to talk.
- Australia is home to a wide variety of reptiles and amphibians, including snakes, turtles, lizards, crocodiles, frogs, and toads. Several of the world's most poisonous snakes are found in Australia, including the eastern brown snake and the taipan.





# OBSERVING AUSTRALIAN ANIMALS



Observing animals from Australia at the zoo

## PROCEDURE

- When at the zoo, give each student the provided worksheet.
- Have each student choose an animal in Australia and fill in the blanks on the worksheet with information about their chosen animal.

## RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT

- Check to make sure all information was filled out.
- Have students compare their animal with their neighbor's animal.

## TEACHER HINTS

- Note that the student worksheet has two pages.





# OBSERVING AUSTRALIAN ANIMALS



Choose an animal at the zoo from Australia. Fill in the blanks below with information about your chosen animal.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

My animal is \_\_\_\_\_

Find your animal. Use all your senses to answer these questions:

1. Sketch your animal carefully on a blank page.

2. Guess how much your animal weighs (in pounds):

3. Guess how long or tall your animal is (in inches):

4. How does the animal move from place to place?

5. How many arms, legs, wings, fins, or other structures?

6. Compare the front and back legs.

7. How many toes on each foot? Does it have toenails?

8. Observe the animal for 10 minutes. Make a check mark each time it does one of the following:

Walks		Runs	Lies Down	Eats
Drinks	Grooms Itself	Grooms Others	Yawns	Looks at People





# OBSERVING AUSTRALIAN ANIMALS



Name \_\_\_\_\_

9. If there are several animals in the group, can you tell which ones are the leaders? How can you tell?

10. Describe the coat and coloring of the animal. Include body color, face color, and markings or patterns.

11. Describe the eyes. Include color, size, and shape of pupils. Are the eyes located on the front or the sides of the head?

12. Describe the ears.

13. Describe the sounds made by the animal.

14. Describe the smell of the animal.

15. How is the animal like you? How is it different?

