

284. Australian Habitats

Three Non-Chronological Reports based on the three main PowerPoints in PDF and Word format - enlarge for shared reading/writing

Walking in the Outback

Most of central Australia is dry desert and scrubland. This area is known as the Outback. It's a very dry place because it has very little rain. Not many people live there but there are lots of different kinds of animals living wild in the Australian Outback.

Dingoes

Dingoes are medium sized wild dogs. They are found mainly in the Australian Outback but can be found all over Australia, except in Tasmania. Dingoes are meat eaters and hunt mainly at night. Baby dingoes are called pups and are born in a den. They might look like pet dogs but they're not, they are wild animals and can be dangerous.

Camels

Camels were brought to Australia about 200 years ago and now a million of them roam freely round the Outback. Camels have become a very big problem in Australia. Whenever they go they leave a trail of destruction and damage to the environment. People worry that so many wild camels are destroying large areas of the Outback. The Australian government are trying to think of ways to get rid of them.

Kookaburras

Laughing Kookaburras can be seen along the edges of the Outback. They are known for making a calling sound like a laugh. Kookaburras sit and wait until they see their prey then launch themselves from their perches to pounce. Farmers like kookaburras because they prey on snakes and rats. Kookaburras use their bills to crush small prey but larger prey like snakes are whacked against a branch or rock or dropped from a height.

Blue-tongued Lizard

The blue-tongued lizard has a long blue tongue that it uses to scare off its enemies. During the warmer parts of the day the lizards search for food such as beetles, caterpillars, crickets, slugs, snails and other small lizards. The lizard's blue tongue inside its pink mouth is designed to frighten off attackers.

Kangaroos

Kangaroos are Australia's best-known animals. They live on grass and leaves and move about with great ease and bounds using their hind legs. They can live happily in the Outback where there's very little water. An adult kangaroo can go for months without drinking anything at all. Female kangaroos usually have only one baby each year. The baby is called a joey and it stays in its mother's pouch for nine months. When it's born it's like a tiny pink worm.

Danger in the Outback

Dry scrubland and desert covers more than half of Australia. The desert regions are known as the Australian Outback. It's a place where there's very little rain. It's also a vast empty place that has many hidden dangers. Many dangerous creatures live there. What dangerous creatures do you think will live in this habitat?

Venomous Animals

There are many venomous animals in Australia including snakes, spiders and scorpions. Many of these live in the deserts in the centre of the Australian Outback. Venomous animals inject venom when they bite or sting. Venom is made up of poisons called toxins and when the venom enters the body of another animal, the toxins are absorbed by the animal's body and often kill it. Venom is what helps venomous creatures to survive. Some inject it into their prey by using their fangs and others use venom to ward off their attackers.

Venomous Snakes

The Fierce Snake lives in the Australian Outback. It's called Fierce Snake because of its 'fierce' venom, not because it's a fierce snake - it's really quite shy. Its other name is Inland Taipan and it's Australia's most venomous snake. It can grow up to two and a half metres long and changes its skin colour with the seasons. It's a much lighter colour in the summer than it is in the winter. The Fierce Snake - or Inland Taipan - eats rats, frogs, small mammals and birds. It kills by using its sharp fangs to inject venom into its prey. This snake usually lays its eggs in abandoned animal burrows and deep crevices in rocks. The eggs hatch two months later and out pop tiny snakes.

Venomous spiders

Almost all Australian spiders are venomous and inject venom with their fangs. However, many spiders have fangs that are too small to pierce human skin and others have venom that doesn't harm humans. Also, spiders only bite people in self-defence. The Red-back spider is one of the most dangerous spiders in Australia. Red-back spiders are found all over Australia, in the cities as well as in the Outback. Only female Red-back spiders bite. Their bites are very painful and have been known to kill. The male Red-back is much smaller than the female and he is harmless. The shy, tangled web in dry, sheltered places. She hides in the top of the web and other creatures like small lizards to become entangled in the web. Males don't build webs.

The Great Barrier Reef

In Australia, the Great Barrier Reef is a long line of coral reefs. It's as high as a forty-storey building and 2,027 km long! Barrier Reefs are called by that name because they make a barrier between the land and the sea. They feel like rock and look like a huge rock garden under the sea.

What is the Great Barrier Reef made of?

The Great Barrier Reef is made up of millions and millions of old shells and the outer skeletons of the tiny sea-animals called corals. Corals look like brightly coloured plants growing in the water but they are sea-animals with soft bodies and hard skeletons. Their skeletons protect them. Corals grow in many different shapes and colours. When old corals die, their skeletons stay on the reef. New corals grow on top of the coral skeletons and slowly the reef begins to grow bigger.

Life amongst the coral

Many different things live on and around the Great Barrier Reef. Sea turtles, lobsters and many different kinds of fish live there as well as bigger animals such as sharks. Lobsters live at the bottom of the ocean and wander amongst the corals while jellyfish float around. There is so much to see amongst the coral that hundreds of tourists visit every year.

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