

Name: _____

Echidnas

By Guy Belleranti

What mammal has spines like a hedgehog, a snout like an anteater, and lays leathery eggs like a reptile? The echidna or spiny anteater. Even though it looks like a cross between an anteater and a hedgehog, the echidna isn't closely related to either of these animals. Actually, its closest relative is the duck-billed platypus.



The echidna and platypus are the only remaining members of a primitive group of mammals called monotremes. You were probably taught that mammals do not lay eggs because their babies are born alive. While this is true for most mammals, monotremes are a little different. Monotremes are the only mammals that lay eggs.

Echidnas live mainly on the Australia's mainland, but some are also found on the nearby islands of Tasr

with sr
claws
earthv
dinner
the bc



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egs

gy
on

In addition to living in burrows some echidnas also live in hollow logs and under thick bushes. The echidna has hair, but no spines, on its belly, legs and face. However, when it rolls up the spines on its back and sides cover the animal completely.

Echidna moms lay only one egg a year. The egg is tiny, about the size of a grape. The mother keeps the egg protected in a pouch on her belly. After 10 days the egg hatches. The baby echidna is called a puggle. The puggle licks up milk oozing from glands in the mother's pouch.

When the puggle's spines begin to grow the mother puts it in a burrow. The mother returns to feed her young every five to ten days. Once the young echidna is seven months old it is able to live on its own.

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1. Echidnas are native to...
 - a. the Southern Hemisphere
 - b. the Indian subcontinent
 - c. Argentina
 - d. Antarctica
2. Besides echidnas, what other species of mammals lay eggs?

3. Name four things that an echidna eats.

4. How are echidnas and kangaroos similar?
 - a. They are both monotremes.

5.



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_____ Echidnas have sharp teeth.

_____ Echidnas live in Tasmania.

_____ A female echidna is called a puggle.

_____ Echidna mothers take care of their young until they are about two years old.

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The scrambled words below are vocabulary words from the article. Unscramble each word and write it on the line. Please be sure each word is spelled correctly.

1. _____

n d l n i a m a

hint: large area of land that does not include islands

2. _____

h o g g e h e d

hint: small mammal covered with spines

3. _____



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4. _____

5. _____

y s p t u l a p

hint: one of only two mammals that lay eggs

6. _____

r w o s e h a r t m

hint: underground animals with no arms or legs

7. _____

u s i c d i o e l

hint: tasty; yummy

ANSWER KEY

Echidnas

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1. Echidnas are native to... **a**

- a. **the Southern Hemisphere**
- b. the Indian subcontinent
- c. Argentina
- d. Antarctica

2. Besides echidnas, what other species of mammals lay eggs?

platypus

(Note: Monotremes is an incorrect answer because they are not a species, but rather a category of animals.)

3. Name four things that an echidna eats.

ants, termites, grubs, and earthworms

4.



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5. Tell whether each fact is true or false. Write *T* or *F* on each line.

T The echidna is a type of monotreme.

F Echidnas have sharp teeth.

T Echidnas live in Tasmania.

F A female echidna is called a puggle.

F Echidna mothers take care of their young until they are about two years old.

ANSWER KEY

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The scrambled words below are vocabulary words from the article. Unscramble each word and write it on the line. Please be sure each word is spelled correctly.

1. mainland

ndlniama

hint: large area of land that does not include islands

2. hedgehog

hoggehed

hint: small mammal covered with spines

3. hollow

llhowo

hint: having a hold or empty space inside

4. but

5. pl



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6. earthworms

rwosehartm

hint: underground animals with no arms or legs

7. delicious

usicdioel

hint: tasty; yummy