

Short-Beaked Echidna

SPECIES • *Tachyglossus aculeatus*

VITAL STATISTICS	
WEIGHT	5–11 lb (2–5 kg)
LENGTH	12–18 in (30–45 cm)
SEXUAL MATURITY	5 years, but breeding does not occur for several years more
INCUBATION PERIOD	Egg develops in the body for 21–28 days, and is incubated by the female, hatching 10 days later
NUMBER OF OFFSPRING	1; weaning occurs at 6 months
DIET	Eats ants, termites, and other insects
LIFESPAN	Up to 45 years

Echidnas are extremely unusual among mammals in laying eggs. Egg-laying mammals are known as *monotremes*. Echidnas and the platypus are the only surviving monotremes.



WHERE IN THE WORLD?



Found throughout Australia and Tasmania.

ANIMAL FACTS

The echidna sweeps up insect prey with its sticky tongue. It is widespread in Australia, in forests, deserts, and grasslands. The female carries her leathery egg in a pouch on her underside. After hatching, the youngster, called a *puggle*, remains in the pouch for several weeks. It is then reared in a burrow. The puggle suckles for more than half a year. Unlike other mammals, monotremes lack nipples. Instead, a patch of skin secretes milk. The milk is pink because it is high in iron. The milk is so rich that the female can leave her puggle alone for up to 10 days after a feeding.



The echidna can defend itself with its spurs or roll into a ball.

SNOUT

The snout measures 3 inches (7.5 centimeters), with the tiny mouth at the end only opening to 0.2 inch (0.5 centimeter).



SPURS

Males have spurs on the hind legs. Unlike the platypus, the spurs of the echidna do not carry poison.



LIMBS

Short limbs equipped with strong claws enable the echidna to bury itself quickly when threatened.

BODY COVERING

The fur between the sharp spines helps to keep the body warm.

FACING OFF

Echidnas are solitary except for the breeding season, when males gather to compete for each female.

HOW BIG IS IT?



CHEW ON THIS

The underside of the body is covered by fur, so echidnas dig quickly to escape danger, leaving their spines exposed.



Fire Salamander

SPECIES • *Salamandra salamandra*

VITAL STATISTICS	
LENGTH	Typically 6–10 in (15–25 cm); males are smaller
SEXUAL MATURITY	4–5 years
NUMBER OF OFFSPRING	Up to 70
HABITAT	Damp areas, of woodland
DIET	Eats insects, worms, snails, and other small animals
LIFESPAN	Up to about 20 years

The black and orange-yellow marking of these amphibians serves as warning coloration. It signals to *predators* (hunting animals) that the skin of the salamander is poisonous.



WHERE IN THE WORLD?



Occurs across much of southern and central Europe, to the western shores of the Black Sea.

ANIMAL FACTS

The fire salamander is a shy amphibian that is active mainly at night. During the day, it hides under logs or rocks. It requires a moist *habitat* (living place), or its moist skin will dry out. The fire salamander's skin tastes bad, so most predators will spit it out even before they are poisoned. In addition, the salamander can spray its poison at predators to discourage attack. The salamander's eggs develop inside the female's body. After the eggs hatch, the mother gives birth to *larvae* (young) that resemble tadpoles. The larvae mature in water, where they go through *metamorphosis* (transformation) into adults. The adults typically spend most of their time on land. The number of these salamanders is falling, mostly because of damage to the environment.

TAIL

Similar in length to the body, the tail has a rounded tip.

TOES

The toes are rounded and stubby.

LEGS

These salamanders can run to cover quite quickly, but they are not strong climbers.

HOW BIG IS IT?



TO EACH HIS OWN

No two fire salamanders are identical in appearance. The yellow-orange spots and lines form different patterns.



POISON GLANDS

Glands in the skin produce poison that can sicken predators.

