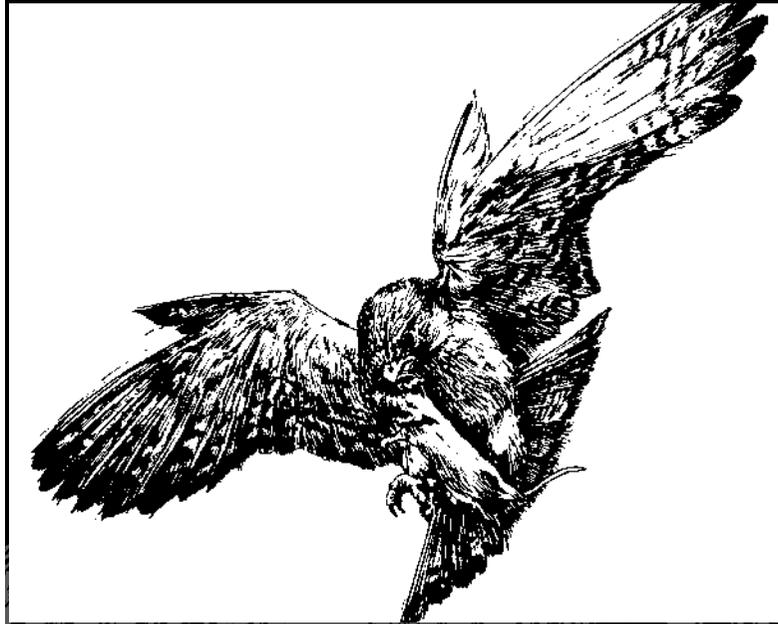


Department for Environment and Heritage

Wildlife of the Desert Parks



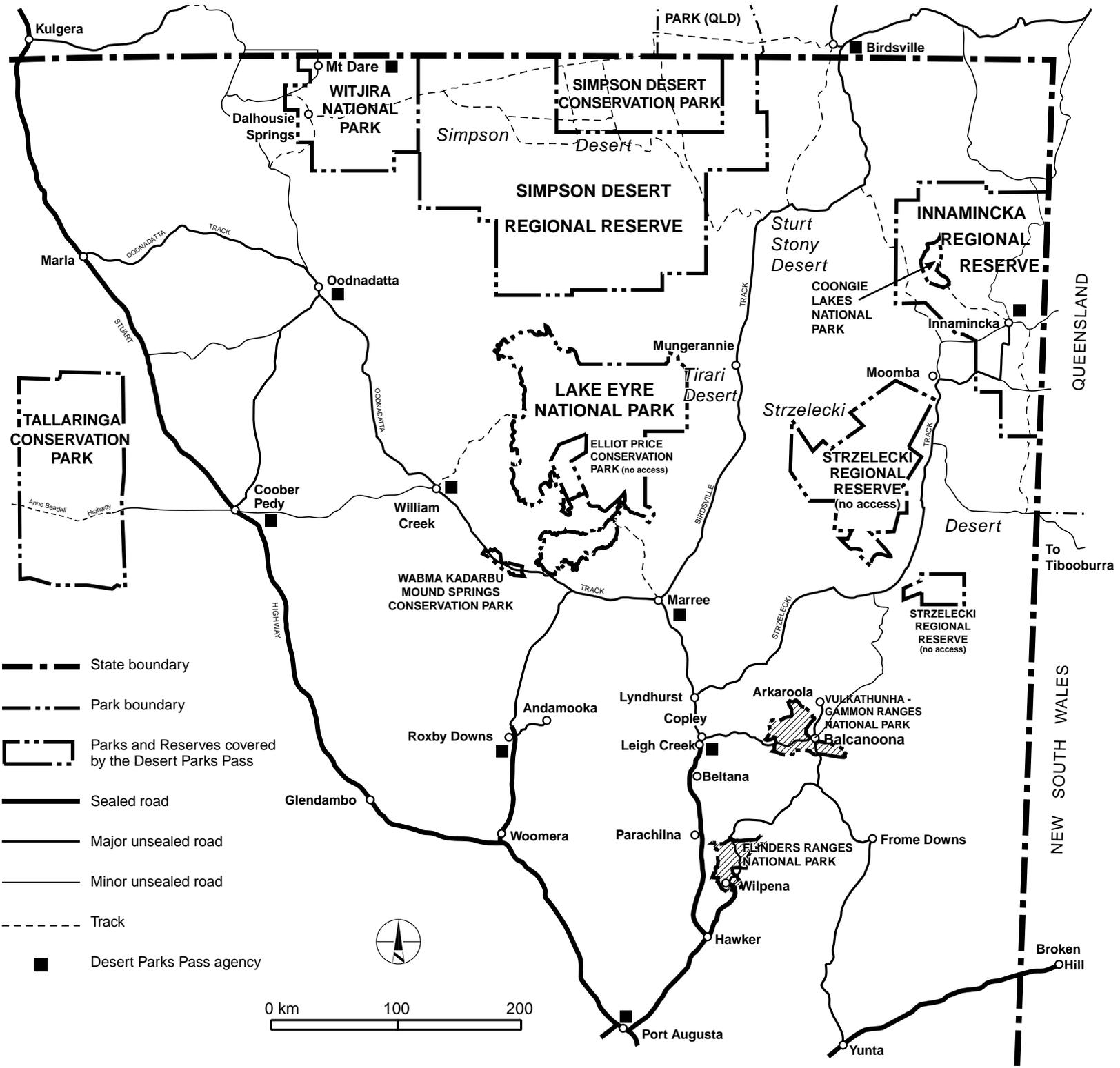
*Healthy Parks
Healthy People*



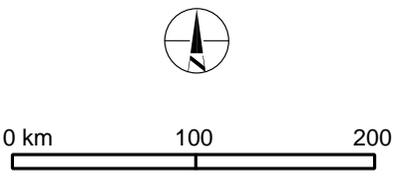
Government
of South Australia



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- State boundary
- Park boundary
- Parks and Reserves covered by the Desert Parks Pass
- Sealed road
- Major unsealed road
- Minor unsealed road
- Track
- Desert Parks Pass agency



QUEENSLAND

NEW SOUTH WALES

To Tibooburra

Broken Hill

TALLARINGA
CONSERVATION
PARK

WILTJIRA
NATIONAL
PARK

PARK (QLD)

SIMPSON DESERT
CONSERVATION PARK

SIMPSON DESERT
REGIONAL RESERVE

INNAMINCKA
REGIONAL
RESERVE

COONGIE
LAKES
NATIONAL
PARK

LAKE EYRE
NATIONAL PARK

ELLIOT PRICE
CONSERVATION
PARK (no access)

STRZELECKI
REGIONAL
RESERVE
(no access)

WABMA KADARBU
MOUND SPRINGS
CONSERVATION PARK

STRZELECKI
REGIONAL
RESERVE
(no access)

VULKATHUNHA -
GAMMON RANGES
NATIONAL PARK

FLINDERS RANGES
NATIONAL PARK

Kulgera

Birdsville

Mt Dare

Dalhousie
Springs

Simpson
Desert

Marla

Oodnadatta

Sturt
Stony
Desert

Mungerannie

Innamincka

Moomba

Tirari
Desert

Coober
Pedy

William
Creek

Marree

Desert

Glendambo

Roxby Downs

Andamooka

Lyndhurst

Arkaroola

Copley

Leigh Creek

Balcanoona

O Beltana

Glendambo

Woomera

Parachilna

FLINDERS RANGES
NATIONAL PARK

Frome Downs

Wilpena

Hawker

Port Augusta

Yunta

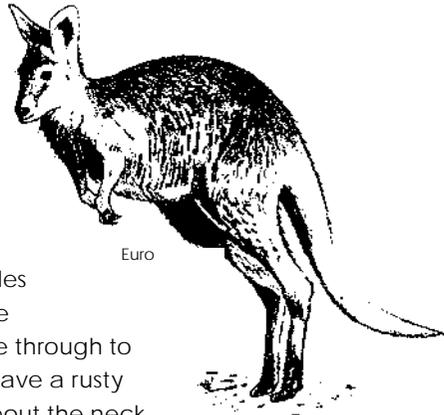
This section gives some ideas about what animals to look for and where to find them in the far north region covering the Flinders Ranges and Desert Parks in South Australia.

Take a pair of binoculars, walk quietly, listen carefully and watch closely.

Kangaroos

There are two species of kangaroo found in the far north.

The Euro, or Hills Kangaroo is a common species. The small females have long, grey fur while the heavier males range through to dark brown and often have a rusty colouring, especially about the neck and shoulders. The Red Kangaroo's name aptly describes most of the mature males, while the females (also known as blue flyers) have blue-grey fur. Red Kangaroos prefer wide open spaces and are the most abundant of the kangaroo species.



Euro



Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby

Wallabies

The Flinders and Gammon ranges are home to the Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby. These animals are beautifully marked

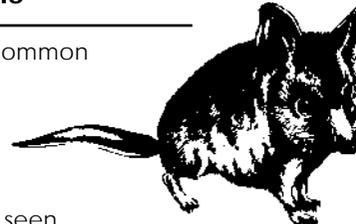
with white cheek and flank stripes. Their bodies are a soft grey while their arms and feet are a russet yellow, and the long cylindrical tail, of the same yellow, is barred or ringed, with brown. The populations within the Flinders Ranges are found on very steep rocky slopes and are mostly associated with permanent water. A good time to observe these wallabies is in the early morning during summer. Yellow-footed Rock-

wallabies are generally more active at dawn and dusk, otherwise they are very difficult to observe being well camouflaged and hidden high up on their rocky escarpments, often hiding in crevices and caves.

Small marsupials

The Marsupial Mole is common on the sand hills of the Simpson Desert, but because it spends most of its life underground it is rarely seen.

They feed on a wide variety of insect and insect larvae. Dunnarts, ningauis, planigales, Kultarrs, Mulgaras and Kowaris are all small mouse- to rat-sized marsupials living in the arid regions. Unlike the rodent, they do not have two incisors at the front followed by molars, but have many needle-sharp teeth, specially designed for eating insects. These small marsupials are generally very difficult to find because they are almost entirely nocturnal. Most of these animals obtain their water through their food and some, such as the Fat-tailed and Stripe-faced dunnarts, can store fat reserves in their tails.



Fat-tailed Dunnart

Dingoes

Dingoes are restricted to north of the dog fence. Since their introduction, rabbits have become their most important food source, although carrion, reptiles and insects also feature highly in a Dingo's diet. Dingoes are often heard howling mournfully at night especially when the air is still and there is some moon. They also howl when coming to drink.

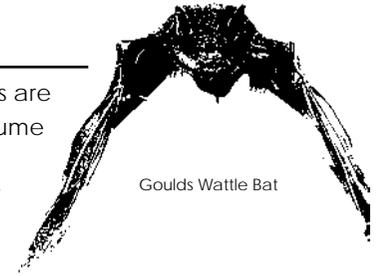


Dingo

Bats

All South Australian bats are insectivorous and consume large volumes of food, some eating up to their own body weight in insects per night. They use large amounts of energy

for flying and to keep warm. Most species of bat are gregarious and live in colonies. Bats of northern South Australia mostly roost in tree hollows or under bark sheets, although some species in the Flinders live in caves and old mine shafts. To survive cold winters, bats are able to reduce their body temperature for several days, remaining in a state of torpor. Although their eyesight is very good, they often fly during periods of very low light using ultrasonic echo-location to determine their environment and find food. Bats are heard around the camp fire at night, producing ascending clicks like scissors in a barber's shop.

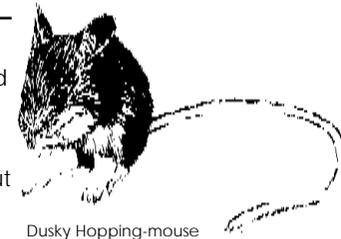


Goulds Wattle Bat

Rodents

There are many species of rodents, including Long-haired Rats, Greater Stick-nest Rats and hopping-mice. Some species are able to live without water, obtaining sufficient

amounts from their food. The most likely species to be seen are Dusky Hopping-mice at night, Long-haired Rats during plagues, and Water-rats foraging on the Cooper frontages.



Dusky Hopping-mouse

Pelicans

Australian Pelicans are nomadic and often congregate in large breeding colonies after floods at Lake Eyre and the Coongie lakes. Pelicans can fly magnificently, circling upward, using thermals to reach fantastic heights from where they can launch into long distance flights following floods and fish. If you watch

pelicans in hot weather you will notice them with their beaks open and the soft pouch skin pulsating.

This is an effective cooling mechanism known as 'gular fluttering.' Please keep away from nesting sites as the nest is a simple scrape on the ground and the hatchlings are naked and vulnerable.



Australian Pelican

Ducks and swans

There are many species of duck in the far north. The most commonly seen are the Pacific Black Duck and Pink-eared Duck. The Pacific Black Duck, distinctive with its two white face stripes and white wing flashing, is widespread. The Pink-eared Duck is well suited to temporary inland shallow lakes and has a highly specialised bill with fine ribs (lamellae) to filter microscopic plants and animals. Freckled Ducks are rare but take refuge and breed in the Coongie lakes. They are related to Black Swans, have dark plumage and a ski jump shaped bill. Nests vary greatly, for example Australian Wood Ducks nest in tree hollows, while Black Swans build bulky platforms in shallow water. During moulting season they are unable to fly and are most vulnerable.



Pacific Black Duck

Birds of prey

The Black-shouldered Kite is commonly seen between Hawker and Wilpena. These small birds of prey are hunters, spending a great deal of time hovering over the open grasslands and saltbush. Black Kites are commonly seen in the far north. They are soaring birds and may not flap their wings for considerable periods,

but correct their flight continuously. They are carrion feeders and spend most of their time looking for food. There are also several species of falcon in the far north. The most commonly seen are Brown Falcons, which are very swift hunters. Usually, Wedge-tailed Eagles hunt singly but many hunt in pairs for larger game. They have very large nests and prefer to establish them in large trees although they have been recorded nesting on rock ledges in the Flinders, and in small trees in the deserts.

Bustards

These stately birds are often seen close to roads in grassy areas. Their immediate response to being frightened is to freeze, and often this is how you will find them, standing stock still not far from the road. Australian Bustards are nomadic and apparently follow the heavy rains. They eat a great number of insects and the seeds and fruits of plants. They only breed when food is abundant and then only lay two eggs. Because they are slow to breed and reluctant to fly when threatened, they are an endangered species. Please help to protect them.

Brolgas

Brolgas wade in the shallows, plunging their heads under the water to dig for roots and corms, preferring swamps where the small spike-rush *Eleocharis dulcis* grows. The spike-rush has a small underground 'nut' like a water chestnut, which the Brolgas like to eat.

They also eat small animals such as yabbies and mice. Pairs are often seen near the creeks and flats along the Strzelecki and Cooper creeks. They are nomadic, following the seasons and rain. If you are lucky you may get the opportunity to see Brolgas dancing. Standing opposite each other, their wings open and

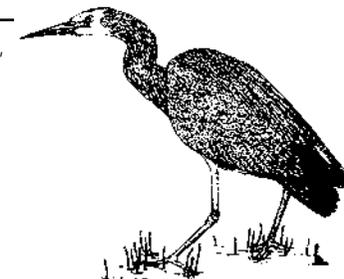


Brolgas

shaking, they advance and retreat with their heads bobbing, occasionally leaping a metre into the air, throwing their heads back and trumpeting.

Hérons and egrets

These birds feed on insects, crustaceans, frogs and fish. The Little Egret uses its wings to shade the water and reduce glare, which may also attract fish. If you are in the Flinders Ranges you are more likely to find the White-faced Heron stalking frogs, tadpoles or small yabbies in the clear shallow water in the gorges. The Nankeen Night Heron comes out at night to feed. You may have a chance to see one if you watch closely while canoeing through the more densely vegetated sections of the Cooper Creek, particularly at twilight.

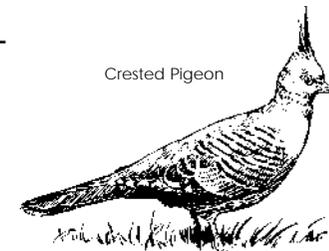


White-faced Heron

Pigeons

Pigeons of the far north are mainly nomadic due to the drought/flood cyclic nature of the desert environment.

The Crested Pigeon is common throughout the northern deserts, and mostly eats grass and the leaves of medic clovers. Crested Pigeons and Common Bronzewing take off and fly with a sharp trilling noise. An uncommon species occasionally seen in Witjira National Park and Innamincka Regional Reserve in flocks of several hundreds is the Flock Bronzewing. Once common, its range is now restricted to native grasslands. The Flock Bronzewing is buff-brown above and grey below, the male has a distinctively marked black and white head.



Crested Pigeon

Parrots

Parrots are the most commonly seen and heard bird species in the outback. Most visitors are impressed by the clouds of white Corellas and the flashing pink and grey flocks of Galahs. The majestic Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo is usually found feeding on hakeas and acacias along the Finke River. The single vivid green flash often seen when passing through wooded country belongs to the Australian Ringneck.

This startling plumage with the yellow neckband blends very well with the background foliage making the bird difficult to observe.



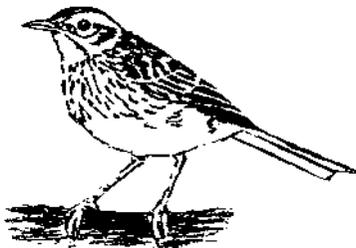
Parrots

Smaller parrots

The Red-rumped Parrot is commonly seen feeding in small flocks. Pairs are easiest to see when breeding, often sitting above their hollows preening each other. Cockatiels are nomadic, leaving the far north when food becomes scarce. Apart from eating seeds of grasses, shrubs and trees, they are also fond of the sweet sticky berries of mistletoe. The smallest of the parrots is the Budgerigar, which feeds almost exclusively on the seeds of herbs and grasses. Budgies are more regularly observed in flocks of up to several hundred.

Little brown birds

When driving slowly along narrow bush tracks the eye may catch a flash of brown and two stripes of white, flying for a short while along the road and then disappearing into the bush. It's the Australian Pipit. Pipits are widespread and common



Australian Pipit

in the open grasslands of Australia. Their diet consists mainly of insects, but they also eat some seed. Some of the most difficult birds to see are the grasswrens (Eyrean Grasswren in the Simpson and Striated Grasswren in the Flinders). The Cinnamon Quail-thrush is found in the beginning of breeding season - it can breed at any time of the year but mostly from July to September. The males may spend all day on top of a small bush singing their melancholy song. Hard mechanical notes may bring your attention to the Brown Songlark, doing its helicopter impersonation: calling while flying up then fluttering down with its legs dangling. It is most likely to be found in saltbush habitats.

Honeyeaters

Honeyeaters are aggressive little birds defending their territories from other species. Their tongue has a brush tip which acts like a paint brush, absorbing nectar from flowers or honeydew from plants. Honeyeaters have strong beaks to capture and eat insects. Insects provide necessary protein in their diet.

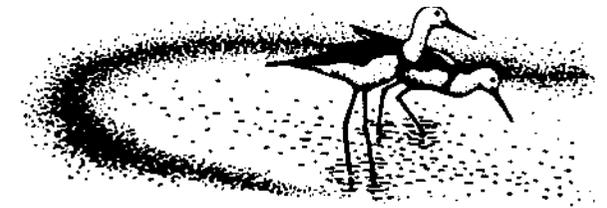
There are fourteen species represented in the far north. The Black Honeyeater shows preference for red flowered emubushes and flowering bloodwoods, although it takes nectar from other species and eats insects. The Yellow-throated Miner is sedentary in most places. Despite its short bill it feeds on nectar, but also seeks insects, and has been recorded digging in cow pats for insects. The Singing Honeyeater feeds on nectar and insects, including ants. It is known to raid nests of Zebra Finches, taking eggs and chicks. White-plumed Honeyeaters are usually found in River Red Gum woodlands. A large proportion of their diet consists of 'manna', a sugary sweet white crust which covers insects, found on gum leaves.



White-plumed Honeyeater

Waders

Many of the wading birds are migratory, most flying between the Northern and Southern hemispheres. Australian Pratincoles nest on gibber within a few kilometres of water. Black-fronted Dotterels nest close to the water edge, preferring gravelly shores with low grasslands behind, or steep banks. They feed on small crustaceans, insects and even a few seeds. Banded Stilts are only found in Australia, but like other waders, are capable of flying long distances. In the year 2000, following heavy rain, 20 000 breeding pairs of Banded Stilt nested on Ibis Island in Lake Eyre North. Banded Stilts feed on brine shrimp.



Banded Stilt

Frogs



underground frog

The Spotted Grass Frog is common over most of south-east Australia and has recently been discovered at Dalhousie Springs. Visitors to the gorges of the Flinders Ranges will hear its deep rasping call. The desert adapted frogs generally emerge during warm wet nights to feed and mate. Incredibly, dry and seemingly barren country can come alive with thousands of frogs after rain. It is an interesting experience being trapped in flooded country with thousands of frogs. Enjoy it!

Geckoes

Geckoes are generally hard to find because they are nocturnal and usually shy.

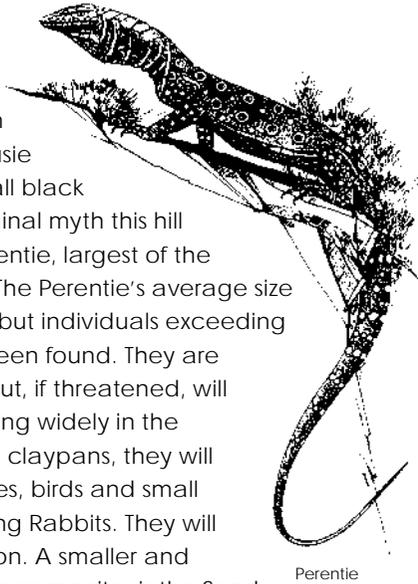
They feed on moths and other insects. The Bynoe's Gecko is highly variable in colour from light grey to red-brown with little lumps and bumps over its body.

It has closed toes rather than pads because it spends its time amongst ground litter instead of climbing trees. Take care when collecting firewood because you are probably collecting the homes of these fascinating animals.

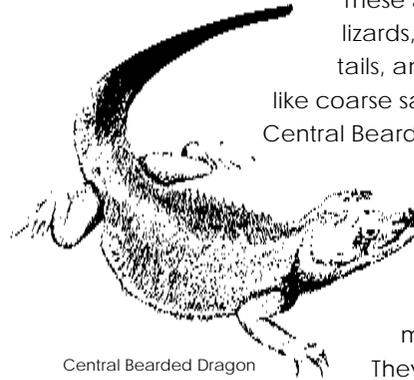


Monitors

In Witjira National Park, just to the east of the road between the main spring and Dalhousie ruins, stands a small black hill. In local Aboriginal myth this hill represents the Perentie, largest of the Australian lizards. The Perentie's average size is 1.6 metres long, but individuals exceeding 2.5 metres have been found. They are ground dwelling but, if threatened, will climb trees. Foraging widely in the sandy deserts and claypans, they will take insects, reptiles, birds and small mammals, including Rabbits. They will also feed on carrion. A smaller and more commonly seen monitor is the Sand Goanna. It is yellow with fine darker bands and a yellow-white tip on its tail. It has similar habits to the Perentie, eating the same sort of food, ranging over large areas and sheltering in burrows or hollow logs. To obtain a good view of its surroundings it can stand on its hind legs and balance on its tail as a sort of tripod.



Dragons



These are long-legged lizards, with long tapering tails, and skin that feels like coarse sandpaper. The Central Bearded Dragon will often be spotted sitting atop a tree stump or fence post, or sunbasking in the middle of the road.

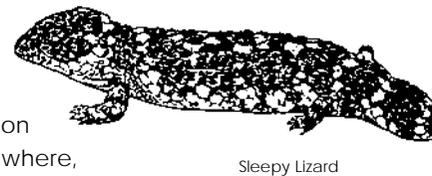
They are not fussy in their tastes, eating insects,

flowers and soft herbage. The male Tawny Dragon is a small colourful lizard showing bright blue, orange and/or yellow colourings. The female is grey or brown. They are found among rocks in the mountainous country only as far north as the North Flinders Ranges. The Painted Dragon is as brightly coloured as the Tawny Dragon, but prefers to live and forage in sandy soils and among the low vegetation and ground litter. The Lake Eyre Dragon was found by CT Madigan in 1929. It is a small earless dragon whose main food is the harvest ant.

Skinks

The Sleepy Lizard, is a regular sight in almost all terrains.

It is particularly common in the Flinders Ranges where, during the breeding season of late September to November, hundreds can be seen in pairs crossing the road. They are omnivorous, eating insects, snails, carrion, flowers, fruits and berries. One unusual skink which may wander into camp at night is the Narrow-banded Sandswimmer. A small lizard, as thick as your finger, it burrows with snake-like movements. Its scales are smooth and almost waxy, creamy coloured with orange to brown bands across



the body and tail. Amongst the rocky outcrops in the far north, small piles of black pellets with white ends can be found. These piles are a clue that Gidgee Skinks live nearby. It is a moderately large skink (to 27 cm) with a very spiny tail, which it uses with great effect to resist being dragged from its rocky retreat.

Snakes

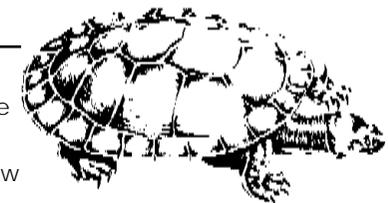
The Western Brown Snake, Mulga or King Brown Snake, Desert Death Adders, and the Inland Taipan are all found in the far north.



Although these snakes are not common and generally try to avoid contact with humans, they are venomous. They are quiet stalkers of prey, and are well camouflaged. The Desert Death Adder is probably an exception, being mostly nocturnal and lying in wait for its food, with the tip of its tail twitching to attract prey. The pythons, unlike the fanged snakes, are not poisonous. They coil around and suffocate their prey.

Turtles

Murray Short-necked Turtles are found in the Cooper Creek. They are green with a yellow eye and chin stripe, and are web-footed with strong claws for climbing trees.

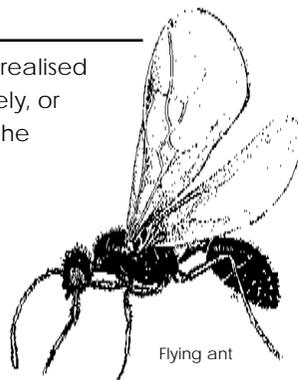


They mainly eat plant and animal matter. In summer, tortoises spend much time in the water to keep cool, but bask on trees to reduce their body temperature. In winter they are rarely seen but may be sighted sunbasking on River Red Gums or Coolibahs.

Insects

Having read this far you will have realised that much of the wildlife relies solely, or partially, on insects for their diet. The variety of insects is staggering, from the giant ghost swift moth to microscopic species, and from graceful butterflies to dung beetles. All insects have fascinating life histories, many having at least three stages: larva, pupa and adult.

Some species, such as locusts, are very mobile while members of the same group, such as the wingless morabine grasshopper, may spend their whole lives under a single bush. On the drive from Kudriemitchie to Coongie Lake you may see hundreds of bags hanging from trees which contain caterpillars of what is described locally as the 'bag' moth. This caterpillar is very hairy and can cause severe skin irritation.



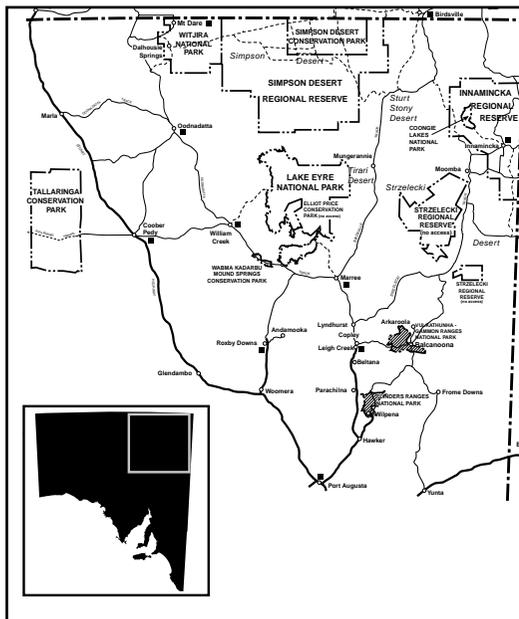
Flying ant

Spiders

Spiders can be divided into two groups, the hunting spiders and the web-building spiders. The Huntsman Spider shelters under bark and often has its white, messy web hidden under the bark sheet. It is not dangerous but will rear up and threaten if provoked. The Simpson Desert Trapdoor is also a hunter but builds a burrow. Unlike other trapdoors it lives in shifting sand and has to use thickly woven silk to hold the sand in place. Often found amongst Elegant Wattle in the Flinders Ranges is the spectacular web of the Golden Orbweaver. They will shake the web when threatened and this seems to keep large birds away while small birds are sometimes caught in the web. In some cases, the bird becomes the meal, but this is rare. Flying insects are the main diet.



Golden Orbweaver



For further information contact:

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