



Short-beaked Echidna

Fast Facts



Other Names: Echidna

Scientific Name: *Tachyglossus aculeatus*

Conservation Status: Least Concern



Body Length: 30–45 cm

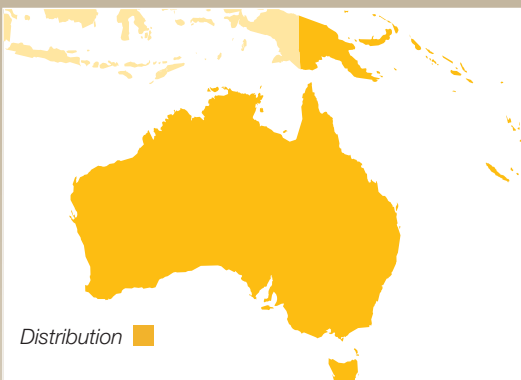
Weight: 2–7 kg

Incubation: 14 days

Number of eggs: 1

Habitat: All habitats

Distribution: Australia, New Guinea and some off shore islands



Description

Short-beaked Echidnas are covered with long, brown-black and golden spines. Under the spines, the echidna's body is covered with fur. Its long, tubular and toothless snout is naked. The tongue is long and sticky and is around 18 cm long.

Diet

The Short-beaked Echidna is an insectivore and eats ants and termites. The echidna digs its way into ant or termite nests with its front paws and extends its long, sticky tongue into the nest. The insects stick to the tongue and are drawn into its mouth where they are crushed up.

Breeding

Echidnas are one of only two Australian mammals that lay eggs. The baby hatches after 10 days and is carried around by the mother for three months in a pouch-like skin fold. This baby is called a 'puggle'. The mother carries the baby around until its spines start to develop.

Threats

There are no significant predators of adult echidnas, but dingos will occasionally eat them. The spiny coat provides an excellent defence. When disturbed, the echidna curls into a spiky ball. When attacked, it may dig very quickly and bury itself in the soil.

At Perth Zoo

Perth Zoo houses a number of echidnas in the Australian Bushwalk.

Perth Zoo bred its first ever Echidna puggle in 2007. It was only the ninth ever bred in Australia. There have been more successful births of Echidnas at Perth Zoo in subsequent years.

DID YOU KNOW?

Each spine is formed from a single hair.

Echidnas and platypuses are monotremes.

This means that they are mammals that lay eggs.