

Echidnas



How do the echidna's features help it live in its natural environment?

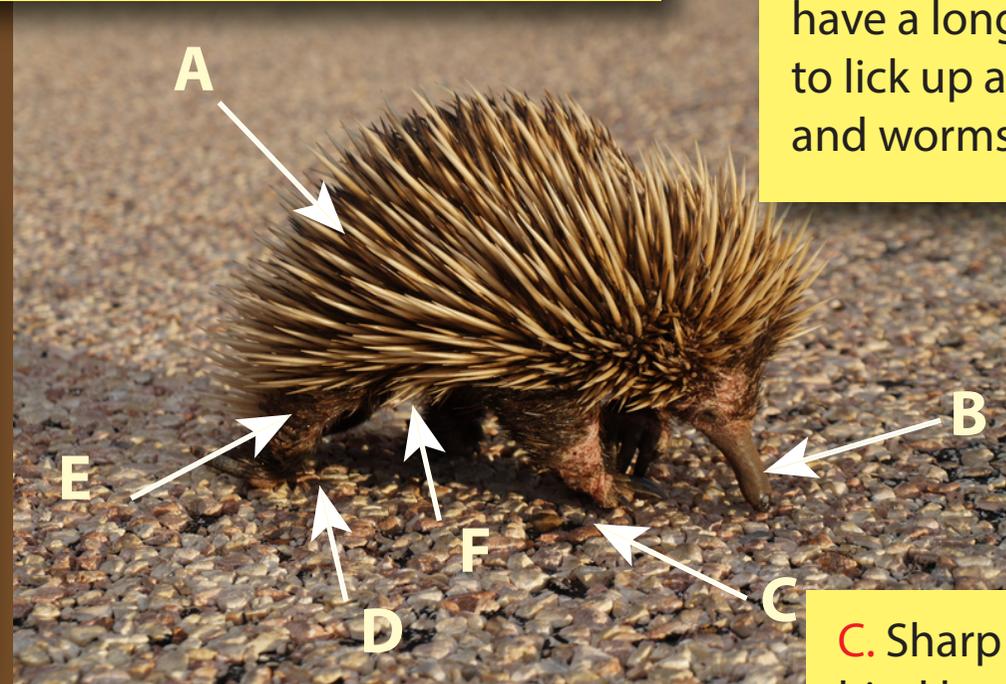


Echidna Features

F. Backwards opening pouch prevents soil entering while mother is digging.

A. Fur covered body with long spiny quills that provide protection from predators. Echidnas will roll themselves into a spiky ball when threatened.

B. Long thin snout for digging into soil and scratching at vegetation. Echidnas have an extremely sensitive snout that helps them detect prey. They have a long, thin, sticky tongue to lick up ants, termites, grubs and worms.



E. Short, stout legs well suited to scratching and digging in the soil and among termite mounds. Hind feet face backwards to make pushing soil easier when digging.

D. Male echidnas have spurs on the hind feet that secrete a substance that they use to mark their territory during breeding season. Unlike the platypus, these secretions are not venomous.

C. Sharp claws on front and hind legs for digging and breaking up termite mounds. Echidnas also avoid predators by quickly digging their soft underparts into the soil, leaving just their spiky backs exposed.

Echidnas will bury their soft body parts in sandy soil when threatened. They look like a spiky plant. What a great way to protect yourself against predators! Ouch!





Echidnas use their powerful claws to dig the soil as they look for grubs and insects to eat.



They use their long snouts to break through rotting wood in search of termites.

The female echidna lays a single leathery egg which incubates in the pouch for ten days until it hatches. The newly hatched echidna is about 1.5cm in length and is blind, hairless and spineless.

The baby suckles in the pouch for 2-3 months. When it develops spines the baby is expelled from the pouch. The mother digs a burrow for the baby. The mother continues to suckle the baby for the next six months. A baby echidna is called a puggle.

The echidna is a protected animal in Australia. It is against the law to capture or kill an echidna.

The echidna features on the 5 cent coin in Australian currency.

