

Wildlife fact sheet

**WILDLIFE
VICTORIA**
ON CALL TO HELP
13 000 94535

Echidnas

Interesting facts

- Females create a temporary false pouch after mating where they store their egg. After 10 days this egg hatches and the baby echidna (called a puggle) stays in the pouch for 8-10 weeks.
- Like the platypus, Echidnas are monotremes, which is a mammal that lays eggs.
- Echidnas can live up to 50 years and puggles (young echidnas) can be independent from as young as 10 months old.
- Adult echidnas can vary in size between 35 to 50cm; however their tongue can be up to 18cm long.
- Echidnas are present all over Victoria, in both suburban and regional areas.
- They are insectivores – this means that they eat things like ants, worms, beetles and termites.
- They have been known to swim in dams and creeks to cool down in hot weather.



Dogs and cats with echidnas

- If you find an echidna, please keep your pets inside until the animal has moved on.
- If your dog is barking at or trying to dig the echidna out of its resting place please remove your dog from the area immediately then neither will be injured.
- If an echidna feels threatened it will only dig deeper as a form of self-defence. As soon as the echidna feels comfortable again it will continue on its way.

www.wildlifelifevictoria.org.au

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We hope that by increasing your understanding and awareness of our beautiful wildlife, you feel empowered to confidently deal with wildlife situations in an informed, safe and appropriate manner. For support at any time, please call our emergency response service for advice on 13 000 94535 or report the details on our website <https://wildlifelifevictoria.org.au/wildlife-victoria-rescue#report>.

Echidnas passing through

- With the increase of development encroaching on their habitat, echidnas are turning up in backyards and public areas more frequently.
- Sometimes you may find an echidna in your backyard and have no idea how it got there. Echidnas are particularly adept climbers and can easily scale a fence or climb a tree. Echidnas have been recorded up to 2 metres up a tree!
- Don't be alarmed if an echidna is in your backyard. If it's not injured then it's probably passing through on its way to feed and explore surrounding habitats. They will move on over the next 24 hours.
- Do not try to handle or dig out an echidna. You may injure or cause unnecessary stress to the animal which could result in injuring the animal and maybe you! Do not pressure the animal to leave as it will just feel threatened and bury itself into the ground. If an echidna has buried itself into the ground it feels threatened and will not leave that defensive position until it feels safe to move on. If you find an echidna buried with its quills up, contain any pets and move away from the animal. It should be on its way within a few hours.
- Echidnas are protected in Australia as is all native wildlife and therefore healthy individuals cannot be relocated. Relocating echidnas also affects their ability to locate their burrows, which could prevent a female from returning to feed her young.



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Why did the Echidna cross the road?

- Echidnas are primarily solitary animals, although they do share their home ranges with other. They can travel as far as 100ha for food! They have been seen using drainage culverts to travel underneath roads, however they do sometime have to cross busy roads. Echidnas have finely tuned electroreceptors that can detect electric fields, this helps them to be more aware of oncoming cars!
- Wildlife Victoria receives many calls every day regarding animals struck by cars, echidnas are not commonly called in for this reason. If you see an echidna trying to cross the road please slow down to let it pass. You could pull over if it is safe to do so and put your hazard lights on to encourage other drivers to slow down. Please do not try to handle healthy echidnas, even to place them on the other side of the road, as this can disorientate them. This is especially critical from October through January, as it is highly likely that a female echidna will have dependant puggles in a den.
- If you find an injured echidna please gently place it inside a container with a solid base, a lid and some air holes, and transport it to your local wildlife friendly vet clinic. Do not try to pry an echidna that has dug into the dirt, you may accidentally injure it further. If you're unsure, please call Wildlife Victoria for advice or assistance.



Image: Wendy Vismans

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