



An Echidna is a joy to behold. Echidnas don't walk, they waddle! Their legs are attached to their bodies like those of a goanna, and they 'square gait' (two legs on one side of the body move together, followed by the two legs on the other side). Their front feet turn inwards for burrowing and hind feet are directed backwards to help them move the loose soil from their burrowing aside. Their tracks show a print like a scrape of all the hind claws as the foot is moved forward. Feeding activity is indicated by fresh tracks in the sand and signs of digging and soil being shovelled by the snout (beak).

The Echidna's two hind claws are amazing! They are long and curved for grooming, which is a nice way to end the day after smashing termite mounds and eating 40,000 ants and termites!



Here I come!



Lovely legs



Keep away

Here are some hints to help you with your challenge.

Echidnas are widespread in uncleared areas but are thinly spread, with large (50 hectare) overlapping territories. Best areas are large reserves away from towns where they are less liable to be attacked by dogs and cats or wander on to roads or houses. Good spots are Dryandra National Park, Boyagin Reserve, Yornaning Dam and Yilliminning Rock reserve.

Having a more varied diet than numbats, echidnas range over all land types, but need areas with ground litter for their food sources and crevices and fallen tree hollows for shelter. They are easier to spot and follow in open woodland. Echidnas are nocturnal, but also eat in daytime to get enough food.

Avoid hot and very cold weather when they are more likely to be sheltering in rocks and crevices. You may be lucky enough to see echidnas while driving slowly. You are most likely to hear and see them while walking in the bush as they waddle along and poke their snouts into the soil. To get close to them, quietly move ahead of their general direction and wait quietly where you have the best chance of them reaching you. They have excellent sight, hearing and smell, so you will be unlikely to get closer than two metres of them without them stopping and folding up for protection.

Do not attempt to dig them out or let dogs near them! Be careful if you touch their spines as they often make a sudden movement and will curl tighter or burrow into the soil. Their spines can hurt dogs badly. Shhh! They are unlikely to move before you leave unless you are very still and quiet. You are more likely to see their characteristic feeding signs than echidnas. They tear into termite mounds with their powerful claws, and routinely plough their snout through the soil surface, and make angled shallow trenches with a pointed end where they poke their snout deep into the soil.



Echidna feeding trench



Nose hole



A Puggle. Image WA Museum

Did you know?

Australia's short-beaked echidnas (*Tachyglossus aculeatus*) resemble hedgehogs and porcupines but are quite different. The echidna and the platypus are the only members of the monotreme family, which are mammals that lay eggs and produce milk for their young.



Image Julie Cadwallader

The female Echidna develops a pouch at the start of the mating season, which occurs in July and August. During this time females can be followed by a train of males until she mates. 3 weeks or so after mating the female digs a burrow and lays one soft leathery like egg into this pouch. It takes 10 days for an Echidna egg to hatch. The young blind hairless Echidna attaches itself to a milk patch on its mother's skin inside the pouch and suckles for the next 8 to 12 weeks. Once spines develop on the young Echidna or 'Puggle' is "evicted" from the pouch but stays in the burrow being fed by its mother until the age of 6 months.

Gross Fact

An echidna's poo is long with blunt ends – because it eats so much sand with the ants and termites.



More information: [Sign of the echidna](#)



[Echidna factsheet](#)

