

WOMBATS (Map Ref 30)



LP, UP, LS, US



There are three types of Wombats found in Australia. They are the Common Wombat, the Northern Hairy-nosed Wombat and the Southern Hairy-nosed Wombat. The Northern Hairy-nosed Wombat is one of the most endangered species in the world and there is a great concern that it will become extinct. It is believed that there are less than 100 Northern Hairy-nosed Wombats left in the wild.

Wombats belong to the marsupial family which means that they have a pouch. Because Wombats are burrowing animals, their pouch faces backwards so that it remains clean. They also have sharp claws to allow them to dig extensive underground burrows.

Wombats feed on native plants and nearly all native grasses. They need to conserve energy as much as possible, as they don't get a lot of energy from their food, Wombats might appear slow, however, they are very intelligent animals with a larger brain capacity than any other marsupial. They can also move very quickly when they need to.

Please note the signs around the enclosure asking people to keep their hands away, please reinforce this rule with your students; Wombats defend themselves with a very hard bite which may even cost a person a finger or two! They also have a hard bony plate in their rear - end. This has two uses. Wombats may be chased by predators such as Dingoes or feral dogs, A Wombat will run down a burrow stopping a short distance down blocking the entrance with its bony-plated rear. It is impossible for a predator to bite and, if necessary, the Wombat can also deal its pursuer a fatal blow by kicking up its back legs and crushing the predator's skull against the roof of the burrow. Wombats also have the unique ability to come to a complete stand-still within one step while running, even when travelling at top speed (Wombats travel at approximately 30 km/h). A predator chasing a Wombat will run into the bony-plate leaving it stunned or knocked out while the Wombat makes its escape.

Q1

Have a look at the wombat. How do you think they got their name?

SEE HOW IMAGINATIVE STUDENTS CAN BE! THE SCIENTIFIC NAME FOR SOUTHERN HAIRY-NOSED WOMBATS IS LASIORHINUS LATIFRONS WHICH MEANS BROAD-HEADED HAIRY-NOSE.

Why do you think wombats have sharp claws?

TO DIG THEIR BURROWS.

Q2

Why do you think wombats need burrows? What use would a burrow have?

COOLER DURING THE DAY, PROTECTION, SAFER FOR YOUNG, WARMER AT NIGHT, ESPECIALLY IN DESERT AREAS.

Q3

Wombats have pouches which face backwards. Why?

SO THAT SAND DOES NOT GET INTO THEIR POUCH WHEN THEY ARE DIGGING

Wombats are nocturnal. Why do you think they have developed this behavioural adaptation?

STUDENTS NEED TO INFER WHY, HOWEVER, ONE REASON MAY BE BECAUSE THEY LIVE IN WARMER AREAS SO THEY CONSERVE ENERGY DURING THE DAY WHEN IT IS HOT AND EMERGE AT NIGHT WHEN IT IS COOLER TO FIND THEIR FOOD. NIGHT TIME IS NORMALLY SAFER AS IT IS MORE DIFFICULT FOR PREDATORS TO SEE.



A1

DID YOU KNOW?..The babies of all marsupial animals have the same name. What do you think a baby wombat is called? What about a baby koala? A baby Bilby? A baby Potoroo? (Hint: think of kangaroos!) Congratulations for being so clever!

JOEY

A3

NOTE: You might have been asked to complete this question in your workbook.

Wombats have been known to burrow under fences which can lead to a break in a fence line. As a result/ in the past Wombats have been, shot or trapped by farmers. In your group come up with a design for a 'Wombat-proof Fence'. Give reasons for your design.