

COMPREHENSIVE GLOSSARY

Amazing Animals of Australia's National Parks

by Gina M. Newton

Note: This is an expanded version of the glossary in the book. It includes words that do not appear in the book, but that are relevant to the content in the book.

Word	Meaning
abdomen	Belly (contains digestive and reproductive organs).
ABL	Australian Bat Lyssavirus (ABL). A zoonotic virus (can jump from animals to humans) carried by several bats, so it's best not to touch any bat. There is a vaccine.
<i>Acacia</i>	Scientific (or taxonomic) name of the various kinds of wattle trees and shrubs.
adult	A fully grown and developed animal that can usually breed.
aestivate, aestivation aestivates, aestivating	A state of animal dormancy characterised by a period of inactivity and reduced metabolism. Often triggered by high temperatures or drought. (By comparison, hibernation is usually triggered by cold).
Agamid	Dragon lizards of the family Agamidae.
aggregate	Gathering together to form a group.
akimbo	Elbows turned outward.
alloparental care	Adopting and looking after the young of another, e.g. Australian sea-lions.
alpine	High mountain areas, usually 1,100 m above sea level, where snow occurs in winter and not many trees grow. Australia's, alpine habitat occurs on the highest parts of the Great Dividing Range, and the highest peak is Mt Kosciuszko at 2,228 m above sea level.
altitude	Height or elevation above sea level.
ambush predator (or hunter)	Sit-and-wait predators that hide and launch a surprise attack. Prey is caught by stealth or strategy, rather than by speed or strength.
amphipod	Small shrimp-like, mostly aquatic crustaceans of the Order Amphipoda.
anal gland	Glands that discharge secretion or scent near the final opening of the digestive canal. Often used for marking territory or authority.
angler	A person who fishes for recreation.
antibacterial	Destroying or inhibiting the growth of bacteria.
antiphonal	A two part bird call, or 'duet', between two birds (usually mates). Although the notes alternate from between each bird, it is often timed so that it sounds like a song from one individual.
antiviral	Destroying or inhibiting the growth of viruses.

apex predator (or hunter)	At the top of the food chain and nothing else eats them, e.g. dingo, eagle, sharks.
appendix	In mammals, a small, blind-ended tube coming off the cecum. It contains bacteria that help digest food (especially cellulose from plants) and with immunity.
aquatic	Living in water.
arboreal	Living in trees.
arid	Dry and lacking moisture. Land or climate with little or no rain.
autotomy	When a limb or tail is shed in self-defence. The limb or tail often regrows.
avenue	A type of bower structure built and decorated by the Satin Bowerbird to attract mates (another type is a 'maypole' bower). The avenue is formed by two walls of vertically placed sticks.
aviculture	Breeding and rearing birds in captivity.
baleen	Fibrous plates attached to the upper jaw of baleen whales that filter krill and plankton from seawater for food. Humpback Whales have 270–400 baleen plates on each side of the jaw; Southern Right Whales have 205–270.
<i>Banksia</i> , banksia	Scientific (or taxonomic) and common name of bottle-brush trees and bushes.
'belican'	A made-up word that rhymes with pelican, and refers to its stomach.
bill (or beak)	The term 'bill' and 'beak' are often used interchangeably, although beak is actually a type of bill. Raptors are referred to as having a beak, while wading birds and small birds have a bill. Bill is the better term, as it only applies to birds (and the platypus), while beak can be applied to other animals, like turtles and some insects.
billabong	Or 'oxbow lake', is a dead-end branch from a river that is cut-off after a flood and forms a backwater or stagnant pool.
biodiversity, biodiverse	Biological diversity. It's a measure of the number and abundance of different living things in a particular area.
Bird banding, banded	When a small metal or plastic band placed around a bird's leg. The unique number or colour of the band allows an individual bird to be identified (usually to track its movement, growth or age).
bipedal (hop)	Using two limbs. For swift movement a macropod (e.g. kangaroos) uses a bipedal hop with its power-packed hind legs and with the long tail providing balance. Hopping saves energy at high speeds.
birdstrike	A collision between a bird (or bats) and an aircraft, either in flight or during a take-off or landing roll.
bivalve	An aquatic mollusc of the Class Bivalvia, which has a compressed body inside two shells connected by a hinged ligament, e.g. oysters, mussels, pipis.

blow	The jet of cloudy mist from a whale's blowhole (like a nostril on top of its head) when it breathes. Baleen whales have two blowholes, and toothed whales have one.
blubber	The fat of sea mammals, e.g. whales, seals, sea lions.
bolus	A mass of food that has been chewed.
boom and bust (cycle)	A population that repeatedly increases and decreases significantly in size. Usually driven by food supplies.
bounty	Price paid for killing or capturing an animal.
brackish	Salt water and fresh water mixed together (less salty than sea water).
breaching	When a whale energetically leaps clear of the water (breaks through the surface). It's done for play, to communicate, or to remove parasites.
brood	A group of chicks after they hatch.
brood parasite	A bird that lays its eggs in the nest of another species of bird (the host). Often a single egg is laid and once hatched, the invading chick forces the other eggs and hatchlings out of the nest, e.g. koel, a migratory cuckoo.
browser	Feeds on leaves and twigs of trees and shrubs, rather than on grasses.
brumation	A term sometimes applied to reptile hibernation. It is a period of lethargy and not eating, when the animal usually retreats to a burrow, slows down its metabolism and enters a state of torpor.
burrow	A hole or tunnel dug by a small animal as a dwelling or nesting site. It usually has one or several air filled chambers.
cache, caching, cached	To hide food away for later use.
cecum, caecum	A pouch coming off the large intestine in many mammals that's best developed in certain herbivores.
callosities	Growths of keratinised skin ('rock gardens') on the rostrum and jaw of Southern Right Whales. They're white due to parasitic whale lice and can be used to identify individual whales.
callused pad	Area of toughened skin subjected to pressure (e.g. like on a Koala's bottom).
camouflage	To hide or disguise by blending in with the natural background environment.
camp	Sites where many bats or flying foxes gather—to establish territory, roost, breed and raise young, and exchange information.
canopy	Uppermost branches of trees in a forest, forming a spreading layer of foliage.
capillary action	The ability of liquid to flow into narrow spaces, even against gravity.
carapace	Hard upper shell (shield) covering the back of a turtle, tortoise, crustacean or arachnid.

carbohydrates	Compounds produced by photosynthesising plants (e.g. sugar, starch, cellulose) that are a major type of animal food.
carnivore	Eats only animals.
carnivorous	Feeding on other animals. Includes carnivores (flesh-eaters) and insectivores (eaters of insects).
carolling	A magpie call used to let other birds know of its territory. One bird will start the song, and another (usually the mate) will join in so they singing together.
carrion	Carcasses of dead animals.
carrion feeder	Eats the carcasses of dead animals.
casque	A helmet-like structure, e.g. on the head of a Cassowary.
catch & release fishing	When a caught fish is released back to the wild by the angler.
cathemeral	Intermittently or irregularly active at any time of the day or night
caudal luring	Wiggling the tail to attract prey.
centre-of-gravity	The place where the weight of a body is concentrated so that if it were supported at this point, the whole body would remain in equilibrium in any position.
century	A period of 100 years.
cere	The bare, wax-like or fleshy structure at the base of a bird's upper bill containing the nostrils.
chemoreceptor	A sensory receptor that receives chemical information from the environment.
chick	A young bird, especially newly hatched.
chromosome	Occurs in the nucleus of most living cells and carries genetic information in the genes.
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. An international treaty drawn up in 1973 to protect wildlife.
claypan	A shallow, normally dry depression in the ground, with a dense layer of clay that holds water after rain.
climate change	A long-term change in the Earth's climate and weather caused mainly by increased levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide, produced by the use of fossil fuels. This has resulted in increased temperatures and reduced rainfall in many areas, as well as sea level rise and increased ocean acidification.
clutch	A group of eggs before they hatch.
coastal heath	Low-lying shrubland on the coast in sandy soils. Many of the plants produce nutritious nectar and seeds.
colony	A group of animals (or plants) of the same species that live closely together, usually for mutual benefit like protection from predators.

communal nesting	When two or more birds or animals of the same species care for their young in a shared nest.
communally	Used or shared in common by everyone in a group.
community	An interacting group of various species in a common location.
congregate	Gather together in a group or crowd.
conspicuous	Clearly visible and attracting notice or attention.
constriction	The action of making something narrower by pressure or tightening.
continental shelf	The area of seabed around a land mass (like a continent) where the sea is relatively shallow compared with the open ocean.
convergent evolution	When animals (or plants) that are not closely related, independently evolve similar traits as a result of living in similar environments or having similar life-styles.
copepod	A microscopic crustacean that is often one of the most abundant animals in the plankton of marine and fresh waters.
coprophagia	Feeding on dung (poo).
courtship	Behaviour that results in mating and reproduction.
cracked clay soils, 'cracking clays'	Clay rich soils that shrink and form deep cracks when they dry out.
crepuscular	Active mostly around dawn and dusk.
crustacean	Mostly aquatic animals of the Class Crustacea. They have a hard shell, segmented body and jointed limbs, e.g. crabs, prawns, copepods.
cryptic	Hidden, often blending in with the background.
culling	Reduce the population by selective slaughtering.
Cypress Pine	Or Slender Pine, <i>Callitris gracilis</i> , a native pine tree of south-eastern Australia.
dabbling duck, dabble	A duck that feeds at the water's surface rather than diving under.
dam	A barrier that holds back water (as in a lake or river).
debris	Scattered pieces of rubbish, remains, or broken rocks.
defecate	Poo.
den	A wild mammal's hidden home or lair.
density	The number of animals living in an area.
dewlap	A pouch of skin under the lower jaw of lizards of the family Iguanidae. It's used for communication and territorial display.
diffuse	Not concentrated. Spread out over a large area.

digestive organs	Organs of the body responsible for digesting food.
digits	Fingers and toes.
dimorphic	In birds, the male and female have different plumage (colour and/or pattern).
dispersal	Movement or spreading out from one site to other sites (often from the birth site which enables gene flow).
distribution range	The overall area in which a species is known to occur (but it does not necessarily occur in all parts of this area).
diurnal	Active during the day.
dominance hierarchy	When members of a social group interact, often aggressively, to create a ranking system. They may compete for resources or mating rights.
dominant	Having power or influence over others.
dormant	When normal physical function and activity is suspended or slowed down for a time (as if in a deep sleep).
dormant embryo	Or embryonic diapause, occurs in some species of Macropod (kangaroos, etc.) when a birth is followed closely by mating and the resulting embryo ceases development at an early stage. If the first young is lost, and conditions are good, the dormant embryo resumes development and is born a month later.
drey	Nest of an arboreal mammal, usually spherical and constructed in tree branches.
duck down	Fine feathers of ducks found under the tougher exterior feathers, which are good thermal insulators.
duetting	Occurs in many bird species, including magpies. One bird calls and another bird answers (they sing sequentially). It is useful when visual contact is lost between individuals.
dusk	The darkest stage of twilight in the evening.
ecdysis	When a reptile sheds or sloughs off its skin (it means 'renewing the outer layer'). Sometimes the skin comes off in one piece (e.g. snakes, some geckos), or it comes off in fragments (e.g. most lizards).
echolocation	Dolphins use echolocation to create a 'sound picture' of their environment. They produce short pulses of ultrasonic sound (clicks) that bounce off objects and then listen for the returning echo. It is used to detect prey and navigate.
'eclipse' (plumage)	The dull-coloured plumage of male birds (e.g. ducks, fairy-wrens) after moulting their colourful breeding plumage. It lasts for a few weeks or months and then their normal bright colouring returns.
ecological role (or niche)	The total role an organism plays in its community or ecosystem. How it interacts with and fits into its environment, including how it meets its needs for food and shelter, how it survives, and how it reproduces.

ecosystem	A community of living organisms interacting with each other and with the environment (e.g. air, water, soil) as a system.
ecotype	A distinct form or race of a plant or animal species occupying a particular habitat.
electromagnetic	Related to the behaviour and interaction of electric charges, and electric and magnetic fields.
embryo	An animal before birth or hatching from an egg.
emergent	Protruding out from. For example, aquatic plants that grow above the waterline, or plants on land that are taller than the surrounding vegetation.
endemic	A plant or animal that is 'native' to, and only occurs in, a particular area or country.
EPBC Act	The <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (or EPBC Act) is Australia's national environment law. It protects threatened species and ecological communities, marine species in Commonwealth waters, and migratory species. Under this law an animal is considered a 'native species' to Australia if it were present before the year 1400.
ephemeral	Lasting for a very short time.
epiphyte	A plant that grows on another plant (but is not parasitic). There are often lots of epiphytes on rainforest trees.
erectile	Able to become erect (straight).
estuary	The tidal section of a river, where seawater mixes with river water.
eucalypt	Shortened name for <i>Eucalyptus</i> , the scientific name for gum trees.
Evaporative cooling	When heat is lost from the skin's surface from the evaporation of a liquid (like sweat). (Pelicans lose heat by 'gular flutter'—rippling the skin of the throat and pouch with the bill open which promotes evaporative cooling).
excavate	Make a hole or channel by digging.
exudate	The gum or resin from a tree. Also, the nutritious excreta (waste products) of some sap-sucking insects.
eyrie	The nest of an eagle or other bird-of-prey built in a high, inaccessible place.
Family	One of the eight major taxonomic ranks. It is classified between Order and Genus.
fat	A natural oily substance occurring in animal bodies, especially when deposited as a layer under the skin.
feeding platform	A convenient or habitual place where food is eaten.
fen	A low-lying, marshy or frequently flooded area of land.
feral	Non-native animals living in the wild that are descended from introduced or domesticated animals (e.g. rabbits, foxes, dogs, cats, rats, etc.).

fertile	Soil or land producing or capable of producing abundant vegetation or crops. For example, rainforest soil is very fertile.
fibre	Dietary fibre, or roughage, is the indigestible portion of food derived from plants.
filter-feed	A method of feeding used by some aquatic animals that filter small particles or organisms out of the water (e.g. plankton, whales).
fire regime	The pattern, frequency and intensity of wild fires in an area.
flank	The side of an animal's body between the ribs and the hip.
fledgling	A young (or juvenile) bird that has either become fully feathered or left the nest, but is not yet fully weaned from its parents.
fledging, fledged	A young bird that has wing feathers that are large enough for it to fly.
flock	A number of birds of one kind feeding, resting, or travelling together.
floodline	A well-defined demarcation of the previous highest flood, identified by soil and vegetation.
floodplain	An area of low-lying ground next to a river, which is formed mainly of river sediments and is subject to flooding.
foliage	Plant leaves.
Folivore, folivorous	An animal that feeds on the leaves of trees.
food web	A number of organisms related by predator-prey and consumer-resource interactions. A food web is made up of a number of interrelated food chains in an ecological community. A food chain is a series of organisms in which each is dependent on the next in the chain as a source of food.
foraging	Searching for food.
foregut fermenter	A form of digestion that occurs in the foregut of some animals and involves microbes. It is used by some ruminants like cows, some marsupials like kangaroos, and some rodents.
forest	A large area covered mainly by trees and undergrowth.
fossorial	An animal that is adapted to digging or burrowing, and living underground for most of the time.
freshwater	Found in freshwater, not in the sea.
fringing forest	A strip of forest growing along a watercourse in an area otherwise devoid of trees.
froglet	A small frog.
Frugivore, frugivorous	Feeds on fruit.

fungi	A diverse group of organisms that live by decomposing and absorbing the organic material in which they grow, e.g. mushrooms, toadstools, rusts, moulds, yeasts. Some live above and some below the ground.
gait	The way an animal walks or the pattern of steps at a particular speed.
gastrolith	A small stone swallowed by a bird, reptile, or fish to aid digestion in the gizzard.
gender	The state of being male or female.
gene pool	The stock of different genes in an interbreeding population.
genetically	Relating to or affected by genetics or the genes.
genus	A principal taxonomic category that ranks above species and below family, and is denoted by a capitalised Latin name, e.g. <i>Dasyurus</i>
gestation period	The time of development from conception (fertilisation of the egg) to birth.
gibber (plain)	Gibber plains are flat areas covered in loose rocks and stones of various sizes in arid and semi-arid parts of Australia. They are sort of like a rocky pavement. The name 'gibber' comes from the Aboriginal word for stone.
gizzard	Front end of a bird's digestive tract, where muscular walls grind up food. Sometimes the bird swallows stones to help with the grinding.
gland	An organ in an animal body which secretes particular chemical substances for use in the body or for discharge into the surroundings.
glean	To gather slowly, like bats plucking off insects.
global warming	A gradual increase in the average temperature of the Earth's atmosphere and its oceans - a change that is believed to be permanently changing the Earth's climate.
Great Dividing Range	A chain of mountains curving along the east coast of Australia and Australia's longest mountain range, and the third longest land-based range in the world.
Gondwana	Name given to the more southerly of two supercontinents (the other being Laurasia) that were part of the Pangaea supercontinent that existed from approximately 300 to 180 million years ago and from which the Australian continent split.
grass tussock or hummock grass	Dense clumps of grass are called 'tussocks'. Mounds of grass like Spinifex (<i>Triodia angusta</i>) are often called 'hummocks'.
grazer	Eats mainly grass and herbs.
gregarious	Lives in flocks or loosely organised communities.
habitat	The natural home or environment of an animal.
habitat fragmentation	When habitat loss results in the division of large areas of habitat into smaller, more isolated patches.
hare	A type of large and fast rabbit with long, erect ears.

hatchling	A young animal that has recently emerged from its egg.
hawking	When birds hunt and catch flying insects while flying themselves ('on the wing').
hawthorn	A thorny shrub or tree of the rose family, with small red fruits.
heath, heathland	Land covered with low-lying shrubs, bushes and herbs, often on sandy soils.
hectare	A metric unit of area. 100 hectares equals one square kilometre.
Herbivore, herbivorous	Eats only plants.
hibernation	A winter survival strategy characteristic of some mammals in which the metabolic rate slows down and it enters a deep sleep. The animal survives on stored fat that they have accumulated in summer. In insects, hibernation is called 'diapause', a temporary pause in development and growth.
'hide'	home
hierarchy, hierarchies	When members of a group are ranked according to status or authority.
highland	Higher altitude locations (above sea level), like mountains and alpine areas.
Hindquarters, hind legs	Region around back legs; back legs.
Home range	Area surrounding a territory that may be traversed to search for food or mates but is not generally defended (as is the territory).
host	An animal or plant on which another organism lives.
humus	The organic component of soil, formed by the decomposition of leaves and other plant material by soil microorganisms.
hybrid	Offspring of two plants or animals of different species or varieties.
hyrax	A small, thickset, herbivorous rodent that lives in Africa and the Middle East.
immature	Juvenile. Not yet reached age of maturity—not yet able to breed or not with final form or colouration of the adult.
incubate/ incubation	To keep eggs at a suitable temperature while they develop and hatch./ The process of incubating eggs, cells, bacteria, or a disease.
infanticide	Killing of young offspring by a mature adult (e.g. may occur in dolphins, rodents, lions).
Infrared (vision)	Able to detect infrared radiation (or heat). Infrared is electromagnetic radiation with wavelengths longer than visible light.
inhabit	Live in.
insect	Insects are invertebrate animals belonging to the group called Insecta. They have three main body parts—the head, thorax and abdomen. The thorax has three pairs of legs. The entire body is protected by a tough outer covering called an exoskeleton. Examples include bugs, moths, butterflies, grasshoppers, crickets and flies. The head has antennae.

insectivorous	Feeds on insects and their relatives.
inshore	Close to the coast or shoreline.
introduced animals	Not native or natural to Australia. Usually brought here during European settlement but can be more recent. Examples are rabbits, foxes, cats, carp and the fire ant.
inundated	flooded by water (e.g. sea turtles' nests might be flooded by sea water).
invertebrates	Animals without a backbone, such as spiders, insects, worms, slugs, snails.
Jacobson's organ	A scent organ typically in the roof of the mouth in many vertebrates, especially snakes and lizards. It senses chemical information from the animal's environment.
juvenile	A young animal that has not reached sexual maturity.
keel-shaped	Like the v-shaped bottom of a boat.
keratin	A fibrous protein forming the main structural component of hair, feathers, hoofs, claws, horns, etc.
kleptoparasitism	A form of feeding where the prey (or food item) is taken by one animal (or bird) from another animal (or bird) that has caught or collected it. This saves the thief the time and effort of catching the prey.
krill	A shrimp-like crustacean that forms large schools. Krill is a Norwegian word meaning whale food.
lagoon	A stretch of salt water separated from the sea by a low sandbank or coral reef. Or, a small freshwater lake near a larger lake or river.
larvae	The early life-history (immature) stage of an insect or other animal that undergoes metamorphosis and usually looks quite different from the adult.
latrine	Toilet.
legume	Plants from the family Fabaceae (Leguminosae) that have edible pods or seeds (e.g. peas and beans).
lethargic	Sluggish, fatigued, sleepy—lacking in energy.
lichen	A composite organism that is formed by a combination of algae or cyanobacteria (or both) living among filaments of a fungus in a symbiotic relationship. Lichens often grow on rocks and trees, and come in many different colours, sizes and forms.
lowland	Generally refers to areas that are closer to sea level, like the coast and inland areas that are relatively flat.
lyre	Musical instrument from ancient Greece.
macrobat	Larger forms of bats, like flying-foxes. (Compare to microbat).
Macropod	Refers to members of the Super-Family Macropodidae—including kangaroos, wallabies, and others.

mallee	Semi-arid woody scrub dominated by mallee—a low growing eucalypts (gum trees) which each have several stems.
mammalian	An animal of the Class Mammalia. A warm-blooded vertebrate, with hairy skin and which feeds its young with milk (via the mammary glands).
mange	A skin disease of mammals caused by parasitic mites, characterised by itching, scabs and hair loss.
mangrove	An ever-green, salt-tolerant tree or shrub which grows in tidal, coastal swamps. It mainly grows in warmer climates and has many tangled roots that grow above ground and form dense thickets.
marsh	Swamps and marshes are both areas that have vegetation and are prone to flooding or are permanently flooded. Marshes are generally nutrient rich wetlands that support mainly reeds and grasses rather than trees. In Australia the terms 'marsh', 'swamp' and 'wetland' tend to be used interchangeably.
mature	This generally refers to sexual maturity and means the animal can reproduce and have young.
<i>Melaleuca</i>	<i>Melaleuca</i> is the genus name for paperbark trees which mainly grow in coastal swamps.
metabolic rate	The rate at which metabolism occurs in a living organism.
metabolism	The chemical processes in the body that sustain life, for example respiration, heart rate and blood flow, digestion, excreting waste products, etc.
metamorphosis, metamorphose	The process of transformation (in form and structure) from an immature form to an adult form (e.g. maggot to a fly, caterpillar to a butterfly, tadpole to a frog).
microbat	Bats with large ears that feed mainly on insects. They tend to be smaller than flying-foxes.
micro-organisms	Microscopic single-celled creatures such as bacteria and protozoa. Their activity in the digestive system breaks down plant cellulose so the body can use the nutritional products.
midden	A mound or heap containing the remains of feeding activities, like shells and bones.
migrate	To move from one region or habitat to another, usually according to the seasons.
mimicry	The close resemblance of an animal or plant (or part of one) to another animal, plant, or object. Also, a copy of the sound made by another animal or bird.
molluscs	Invertebrates of the large Phylum Mollusca, which includes snails, slugs, mussels, and octopuses. They live in aquatic habitats and have a soft unsegmented body and often a hard outer shell mad of calcium.
monotreme	A primitive mammal that lays eggs. Found only in Australia and Papua New Guinea, e.g. the platypus and the echidna.

montane	Of or inhabiting mountainous country.
mortality	Death, rate of death.
moult, moulted, moulting	When an animal or bird sheds its outer layer of skin or feathers, to make way for new growth.
mulga	Usually open and mostly arid scrubland formed by certain <i>Acacia</i> (wattle) trees, especially Grey Mulga, <i>Acacia aneura</i> . A widespread and important landscape habitat in inland Australia.
Murray–Darling Basin	A large geographical area in south-eastern Australia. Its name is derived from its two major rivers, the River Murray and the Darling River. The basin, which drains around one-seventh of the Australian land mass, is one of the most important agricultural areas in Australia.
nape	Of the ‘shoulder’ are of the back - as in bird colouring.
national environment law	<i>The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.</i>
native (species)	Originated in a certain place. Australia’s native fauna are recognised as a native species under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, which defines a ‘native species’ as a species that was present in Australia or an external Territory before the year 1400.
nectivorous	Feeding on the nectar of flowers.
nest, nesting	A bed, structure or place made or chosen by an animal or bird for laying eggs and/or sheltering young.
nestling	A baby bird that is too young to leave the nest.
niche (ecological)	The place or function of a particular organism within its ecosystem.
nocturnal	Active during the night.
Nomad, nomadic	No permanent home or territory. Moves from place to place, usually following food.
non-native	An organism who is not a native of a particular place or country.
octave	A series of eight notes in music—the interval between one pitch and another.
odour	A distinctive smell, often unpleasant.
oestrus cycle	A series of physiological changes in sexual and other organs in female mammals, extending from one period of ‘heat’ to the next, and often accompanied by a behaviour showing interest in mating.
offshore	Out at sea, some distance from the shore.
omnivore	Eats both animals and plants as part of the diet.
on the wing	While flying.

opposable, opposing	As in an opposable thumb, which can be placed opposite the fingers on the same hand, enabling the animal to grasp and handle objects.
opportunistic	To take any opportunity given, e.g. opportunistic feeding—eating anything suitable that the animal finds; opportunistic breeding—breeding whenever environmental conditions are right or good.
Order	A taxonomic rank used in the classification of organisms and recognised by the nomenclature codes. It sits between Family and Class.
osteoderm	Bony plates or bumps found beneath the skin of crocodiles and turtles.
osteoporosis	A disorder in which the bones become increasingly porous, brittle, and subject to fracture, owing to loss of calcium and other mineral components.
ovoviviparous	Gives birth to live young.
pap	A runny form of the female Koala's droppings (faeces) which contains micro-organisms from her caecum (appendix). The female produces pap for a short time when the joey is old enough to eat gum leaves. The joey feeds on the pap so that it will be able to digest its diet of fibrous gum leaves.
paperbark	Trees or shrubs of the genus <i>Melaleuca</i> .
parasite	An organism which lives in or on another organism (its host) and benefits by getting nutrients at the other's expense.
passerines	Birds of the order Passeriformes, which includes more than half of all bird species. They are perching birds and song birds.
patagium	A membrane between the fore and hind limbs that assists an animal in gliding or flight. It occurs in bats, birds, and gliding mammals.
pellets	In birds-of-prey and other carnivorous birds, indigestible bits of bone, beak, fur and scales are regurgitated back up in the form of pellets. Some birds use these to line their nests (e.g. Australian Barn Owl).
peninsula	A piece of land almost surrounded by water or projecting out into a body of water, e.g. promontory, bluff, headland
pentapedal walk	A five-limbed walk used by macropods (kangaroos and wallabies). A macropod supports its body on its front limbs and tail while swinging the hind limbs forwards with a pendulum-like motion.
pinna	External ear of a seal or sea-lion.
placenta	Structure connecting circulatory system of an unborn to that of its mother. It prevents the mother's body from rejecting the infant as a "foreign body".
plankton	Small and microscopic organisms drifting in the sea or fresh water, consisting mainly of diatoms, protozoans, small crustaceans, and the eggs and larval stages of larger animals.
plastron	Flat lower shell on the underside of turtles and tortoises.

platypup	A term for a baby platypus that is gaining acceptance. Many consider that a baby platypus should not be called a puggle, which is the term for a baby echidna which looks nothing like a baby platypus. Puggle also has several other meanings.
pod	Group of whales, often family group.
pop-hole	One of a number of entrances to a complex burrow system.
plumage	The covering of feathers over a bird's body. Its condition and colour may vary with age, sex, and sometimes time of year.
'pothook'	A courtship display of wedge-tailed eagles, either by the male alone or together with the female. The eagle folds his or her wings together and takes a dive, then soars upwards with wings half open, then dives again, then soars upward again. It is an aerial, acrobatic display of great speed, strength and agility.
predator, predation	A carnivore that hunts and kills other animals (the prey) for food.
prehensile (tail)	Able to grip, such as a tail adapted to be able to grasp or hold objects like tree branches or nest-building material.
prey	An animal hunted or seized for food, especially by a carnivore.
productivity	The rate of production of new biomass by an individual, population or community. Also, the fertility or capacity of a given habitat or area.
protein	Large organic molecules that are an essential component of living organisms, especially in structural parts like mussels. Proteins are an essential food source for many animals (e.g. meat, milk, eggs).
puggle	A puggle is a baby Echidna. A puggle is also a breed of dog that is a cross between a beagle and a pug. The name is also Trademarked, and belongs to a toy made in the 1970s.
pupil	The opening of the iris in the eye that determines how much light is let in.
primate	Mammals of the order Primates. They have relatively large brains and a reliance on stereoscopic vision rather than smell, e.g. humans, apes, monkeys.
pulsed call	Bursts of calls which have discrete patterns that can be recognised ('heard'), and form an important component of communication or echolocation for cetaceans and bats.
pungent	Having a strong or sharp taste or smell.
quadrupedal gait or movement	Pattern of movement or walking using four limbs (move quadrupedally).
rail	Birds of the family Ralidae. They have short wings, a narrow body, long toes and many are flightless, e.g. the purple swamphen is a rail.
range	Range or distribution is the geographical area in which a particular species can be found.

rangeland	Open country used for grazing or hunting animals.
raptors	Birds-of-prey like eagles, hawks and owls.
recruitment	When juvenile organisms survive to be added to a population, either by birth or by immigration.
recurved teeth	Teeth that curve back towards the animal. They make it very hard for prey to escape.
reproductive organs	The reproductive system within an organism that work together to reproduce offspring.
rhinarium	A distinctive area of skin, often moist, around the nostrils of a mammal.
riparian (habitat)	The vegetation that occurs on the banks of a river or around the edge of wetlands.
rivalry	The act of competing for the same thing against another animal.
rodent	Mammals of the order Rodentia, characterised by a single pair of continuously growing incisor teeth in each of the upper and lower jaws that must be kept short by gnawing (e.g. mice, rats).
roost, roosting	A place where birds regularly settle or congregate to rest at night, or where bats congregate to rest in the day.
rostrum	A beak-like projection from the snout or head in an insect, crustacean, or cetacean.
saltmarsh	A coastal ecosystem in the upper intertidal zone that is regularly flooded by tides. It is dominated by low-lying, shrubby salt-tolerant plants.
sandhopper	A small crustacean (amphipod) found in beach sand and seaweed.
sandplain	A sandplain is an area where the soil is sand deposited from elsewhere by processes such as wind or ocean, rather than direct weathering of bedrock.
satellite populations	A number of smaller populations that spread out away from the main population source.
savannah (savanna)	A grassy plain in tropical and subtropical regions, with few, scattered trees.
scalloped wings	Decorated with a row of curves along the edges.
scats	Animal excrement (poo).
scatter-hoard	Scattering and hoarding fruits and seeds, e.g. the Musky Rat-kangaroo buries them all over the rainforest. This protects the seeds from predators like rats, helping the germination and dispersal of rainforest plants.
scent	A distinctive odour (smell) often left as a trail by an animal to mark its territory or authority.
sclerophyll (forest)	Plants with tough leaves, as in eucalypt forests. Dry sclerophyll forest is open and wet sclerophyll forest has a closed canopy.

scrape	The simplest form of bird nest construction—a shallow depression in the ground or vegetation, with a rim just high enough to stop eggs from rolling out.
scute	A turtle shell is made of bony plates covered by scutes, which are made of keratin, the primary substance in hair, nails and hooves of other animals.
sea cucumber	A marine Echinoderm (starfish, urchins, etc.) with a thick worm-like body.
sea level rise (SLR)	Caused by global warming and thermal expansion of the ocean, SLR will cause shoreline retreat and an increased flooding risk.
seagrass	A grass-like plant that lives in shallow sea close to the coast.
sea-pen	A colonial marine Cnidarian (corals and jellyfish) that resembles a feather.
seasonally	Occurring or seen only in certain seasons (winter, spring, summer, autumn) rather than the whole year.
sedentary	Tends not to move around much, or is fixed to one spot (like a barnacle).
seed disperser	An animal that disperses seeds by moving them away from the parent plant.
seepage (water)	A moist place where groundwater reaches the surface.
semelparity	Also known as ‘big bang’ reproduction. The single reproductive event is usually large and fatal. Several marsupials show semelparity (with the males dying soon after breeding). The opposite situation, where an animal can have offspring many times during its life is called ‘iteroparity’.
semi-aquatic	Living partly on land and partly in water.
semi-arid	Regions that are partially arid and have low rainfall (25–50 cm per year) and scrubby vegetation.
shed tail	Most lizards (except dragons and monitors) may drop off their tail (if threatened or held). It then regrows, but may look different.
silhouette	The outline of a solid figure as cast by its shadow.
snag	Trees, branches, roots or wood underwater in rivers and streams.
snakelet	A baby snake.
solitary	To live alone without the company of others.
soundscape	The component sounds of an environment.
spat, spatting	An aggressive or noisy confrontation (compared to a full on fight).
spawn, spawning	Release or deposit of eggs by aquatic animals (e.g. fish, frog, crabs).
species	A group of living organisms consisting of similar individuals capable of exchanging genes or interbreeding. The species is the principal natural taxonomic unit, ranking below a genus.
sperm	Male reproductive cells.

spider	Spiders are invertebrate animals of the group Arachnida, along with ticks, mites and scorpions. Spiders have two body parts, a combined head and thorax (called the cephalothorax), and an abdomen. The cephalothorax has four pairs of legs. They have no antennae.
spinifex grass	Spinifex grass, of the genus <i>Triodia</i> , is a tough, spiky tussock grass that dominates much of the red sand desert and rocky ranges of Central Australia. (Should not be confused with <i>Spinifex</i> , a genus of coastal grasses).
spoil heap	A pile of refuse material (dirt and rock) from an excavation.
staccato	A series of shortened sounds (or musical notes), each separated by a brief period of silence.
stream	A body of running water, such as a river, stream, creek, or brook. A river is generally considered as the largest.
stoop	To dive at a steep angle and at considerable speed upon prey. Characteristic of eagle and falcon hunting methods.
stream	A body of water with a current and confined within a bed and stream banks. Examples include: rivers, creeks, brooks, rivulets, branches, anabranches, runnels.
submerged	Under the water. For example underwater aquatic plants.
subspecies	An interbreeding population within a species which differs from other populations and is usually geographically separated.
substrate	The surface or material on or from which an organism lives, grows, or obtains its nourishment. In streams and lakes, the substrate is the sand, mud or gravel at the bottom.
subterranean	Under the ground.
sub-tropical	Regions bordering the tropics, with a subtropical climate characterised by hot, usually humid summers and mild to cool winters.
succulent	A plant with thick, fleshy leaves and stems adapted to storing water. Or, succulent, as in tender and tasty food.
suckle	Feed a young animal milk from the breast or teat.
supernumerary	Generally more young are born than there are teats; because each neonate (newborn) requires exclusive access to a teat for a period of at least one month, supernumerary neonates do not survive.
survey	An examination, description or measurement of something in order to find out more about it.
SVL	Snout-vent length (SVL) is a standard measurement for reptiles which equals the distance from the tip of the animal's snout to the vent opening of its cloaca (bottom). Their tail is usually longer than SVL.

swamp	Swamps and marshes are both areas that have vegetation and are prone to flooding or permanently flooded. In addition to other aquatic vegetation, swamps tend to support more woody plants and trees. In Australia the terms tend to be used interchangeably.
syndactylous	Having the second and third toes of the hindfoot joined up to the start of the nails. This condition is typical of macropods, bandicoots and some possums, where conjoined toes are used for grooming.
Takahe	A large, rare, flightless bird found in the mountain grasslands of New Zealand.
tail flukes	A whale's tail is composed of two lobes, each of which is called a fluke. Flukes move up and down to propel the whale through the water.
taxonomy, taxonomic	The practice of giving animals and plants a scientific name according to their category. The most important is the species name, consisting of two words – the Genus and the Species. In the taxonomy hierarchy, there are eight main ranks: Domain, Kingdom, Phylum, Class, Family, Order, Genus, Species.
teat	The nipple of a female mammal, from which the milk is sucked by the young.
telephoto (vision)	Gives a larger (magnified) image of a distant object.
temperate	Occurring between a Tropic and a Polar Zone. Moderate in heat.
tendon	A strong, flexible collagen cord that attaches a muscle to a bone.
termites	Ant-like social insects that build elaborate mounds (nests) above ground that are linked underground by galleries through the soil to their feeding sites (usually wood). These galleries are easier to get to for a creature such as a numbat, compared to the tough concrete-like mounds. There are about 350 species of termite in Australia.
terrestrial	Living on (or in) the ground, or land dwelling.
territory	An area occupied by one or more individuals and defended against other members of the species. It is usually centred around a nest or burrow.
territorial	Defending a territory.
thermals (thermal air currents)	A column of rising air caused by local unequal heating of the land surface, and used by gliders and birds to gain height.
thermoconformer	An organism that cannot regulate its body temperature internally.
thermoregulator	An organism that can regulate its body temperature internally.
thermoregulation	Thermoregulation is the process that allows an organism to maintain its core internal temperature.
Thylacine	The Tasmanian Tiger, a doglike carnivorous marsupial with stripes across the rump, found only in Tasmania. Extinct.
tibial gland	On the Banjo Frog it's a distinctive gland at the top of the hind leg. The gland produces chemical secretions that are either toxic, or at least distasteful, to a range of predators.

Top End	Geographical region encompassing the northernmost section of the Northern Territory, which is the second northernmost part of the Australian continent.
torpor	A sleep-like state in which the body processes slow down (lowered temperature and metabolic rate). It helps animals to survive tough times when food and water are scarce, or when extreme cold temperatures occur. It lasts only a few hours a day, or a few days or weeks, whereas hibernation usually lasts for months.
transitory	Lasting for a short time; not permanent.
triangulate	Divide (an area) into triangles for surveying purposes.
tridactyl	Foot with three toes which is an adaptation for running, as in the emu, bustard and quail.
tropics/tropical	Occurring between the Equator and the Tropic of Cancer or the Tropic of Capricorn. Higher temperatures and humidity than the temperate zone.
tuber	Thickened part of the stem of a plant, usually growing underground.
tusk	A long pointed tooth, usually one of a pair, projecting from the mouth of certain animals (e.g. boar, elephant).
tympanum	An external 'ear' in frogs, toads and insects. In frogs it is circular and sits behind the eye. It does not actually process sound waves, but it transmits them to the amphibian's inner ear, which is protected from water and other foreign objects.
ultraviolet	Electromagnetic radiation beyond (higher in frequency than) light visible to the human eye; radiation with wavelengths from 380 nanometres to 10 nanometres.
understorey	An underlying layer of vegetation (shrubs, low trees) between the forest canopy and the ground cover. They receive less light than the canopy.
undergrowth	The plants growing beneath the canopy of a woodland or forest.
unique	One of kind; like nothing else.
urban	The towns and cities where people live.
urine	Wee.
vegetation	The types of plants (for example, trees, flowers, grasses, etc.) in an area.
venom	Poison made by an animal (e.g. snakes, scorpions, spiders, bees) and injected into prey or aggressors by biting or stinging.
vent shaft	Or, ventilation shaft, a vertical passage to move air underground.
vertebrate	An animal with a backbone, e.g. mammals, birds, reptiles, fish.
vigilant	Keeping careful watch for possible danger or difficulties.
volplane	To glide through the air.

warbling	A bird singing softly and with a succession of constantly changing notes.
warren	Any of various waterbirds of the family Rallidae, as the gallinule, rail, or coot, which inhabit marshlands.
watercourse	A natural or artificial channel through which water flows.
waterhen	Any of various waterbirds of the family Rallidae, as the gallinule, rail, or coot, which inhabit marshlands.
wattle	Trees and shrubs of the genus <i>Acacia</i> . There are about 1000 species in Australia, and Australia's national floral emblem is <i>Acacia pycnantha</i> , the Golden Wattle.
wean/ weaned	To accustom a young animal to food other than its mother's milk.
weir	A low dam built across a river to raise the level of water upstream or to regulate its flow.
wetland	A wetland is a land area that is saturated with water, either permanently or seasonally,
wet season	The time of year when most of a region's average annual rainfall occurs. It usually lasts one or more months.
Wet Tropics	The Queensland tropical rainforests located in north-eastern Australia.
woodland	A low-density forest forming open habitats with plenty of sunlight and limited shade, often with understory of grasses and low shrubs.
World Heritage Area	A site of special cultural or environmental significance with listing by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), which gives it international recognition and some protection.
yabby	A small freshwater crayfish.
zygodactylous, zygodactly	Where the foot has two forward facing and two backward facing toes. Occurs in parrots and cockatoos and enables them to hold and manipulate objects in one foot while standing on the other.