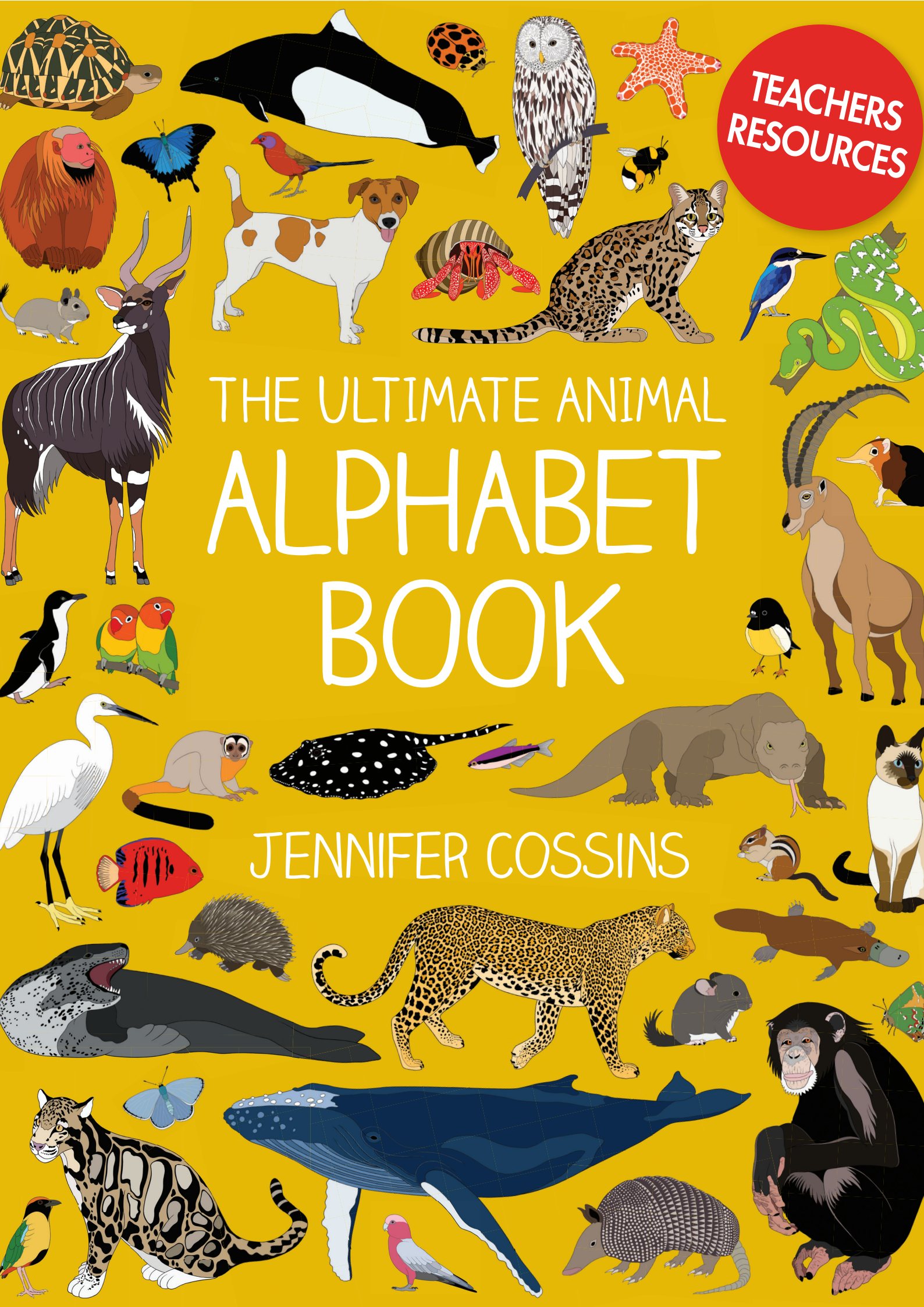


TEACHERS  
RESOURCES

# THE ULTIMATE ANIMAL ALPHABET BOOK

JENNIFER COSSINS



# THE ULTIMATE ANIMAL ALPHABET BOOK

BY JENNIFER COSSINS

## Teachers Resources by Robyn Sheahan-Bright

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# INTRODUCTION

From the Adelie penguin to the zigzag heron, this A-Z book is jam-packed with over 400 animal species and all kinds of interesting animal facts. Discover why the American flamingo is pink, what a baby echidna is called and whether the dusky leaf monkey really has four stomachs.

Cossins' work in this book, as in her previous titles, is richly detailed and carefully researched.

Each double page spread contains a range of creatures each captioned with their name and some with a brief fact about them. The layout is child-friendly rather than ordered. Each letter has a double page relating to it, and contains an assemblage of creatures scattered in no particular hierarchy encouraging kids to enjoy the fun of finding out what each creature is. The captions are written in a font akin to handwriting and there is no attempt to add a detailed key to any of these animals. But children will want to find out more, because most of them are quite uncommonly documented.

Have you ever heard of a Cotton-top tamarin? Or a fossa? Or a nudibranch? Or a weedy sea dragon? Or a xoloitzcuintli?

This is a book full of surprises and will encourage children to seek out further facts and information about these wonders of nature.



## THEMES & CURRICULUM TOPICS

Several themes and curriculum topics (for primary school students) are covered in this book which might be related to: *Australian Curriculum* <<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/humanities-and-social-sciences/>>

### SCIENCE

#### ANIMALS

**ACTIVITY:** Investigate some of the many unusual animals in this book further.

**ACTIVITY:** Investigate different species. Refer to the **Bibliography** of books, films and websites attached to these Teachers Notes to research this topic further.

**ACTIVITY:** Create a slogan and a poster aimed at educating the public about a particular animal.

**ACTIVITY:** Make an alphabetical list of any animals (mammals, birds, reptiles,

amphibians, arthropods, fish, molluscs, or echinoderms) not included in this text and research them further. For example, a dassie. [See **Worksheet 2.**]

**ACTIVITY:** Study other alphabets of animals and compare to this one. [See **Bibliography.**]

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Which of the animals in this book are endangered?

## THE LIFE CYCLES AND HABITATS OF ANIMALS

**DISCUSSION POINT:** What do the animals in this book eat and how much can they eat? For example, 'An armadillo can eat up to 50 000 ants a night.' (p 6) What was the most unusual food source you discovered in this book?

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Some animals have unusual adaptations in their bodies which help them with feeding, for example, 'Dusky leaf monkeys have stomachs with four different sections to help them digest tree leaves.' (p 12) What other animals have developed unique feeding adaptations?

**ACTIVITY:** Study **metamorphosis**, and how some animals change during their maturation cycles, eg. caterpillars/butterflies.

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Study the range of **survival skills** that animals employ in order to stay warm, find food, avoid predators, or to become predators themselves, for example, the Arctic wolves and Antarctic Minke whales (p 7) or the Indian pangolins (p 22) each have special survival skills. What other animal's survival skills did you find particularly interesting?

**ACTIVITY:** Some animals use **camouflage** as a survival skill, eg. Janss' pipefish (p 24), Leafy sea dragons (p 290), and Tawny frogmouths (p 44). There are four main types of camouflage: Concealing Coloration, Disruptive Coloration, Disguise and Mimicry.

[See 'Animal Camouflage: Pictures and Information for Kids' *K5 Computer Lab* <<https://oakdome.com/k5/lesson-plans/powerpoint/animal-camouflage-pictures-and-information.php>>]

Research this topic and how other animals employ camouflage.

**ACTIVITY:** Research the other **special skills** which animals develop for finding food, protecting their territories, and surviving harsh conditions, eg. 'Leopards are excellent climbers and often carry their food up trees to protect it from scavengers.' (p 28) Some animals have '**secret weapons**', such as 'A grizzly bear's sharp front claws can grow as long as an adult human's fingers.' (p 18) Some can **travel incredible distances and speeds**, eg. The Cheetah (p 11). Some can make very **distinctive sounds**. Research such skills. [See **Bibliography.**]

**ACTIVITY:** Some animals have **defining features**, eg. 'The Fijian crested iguana can quickly change colour to black when threatened.' (p 16) Research these unusual creatures further. Apply what you have learned to your observation of several other animals.

**ACTIVITY: Adaptation** is evident in many animals, eg. 'The barn owl has ears that

are lopsided – its right ear is higher than its left – which helps it pinpoint exactly where sounds are coming from as it hunts.’ (p 9) and ‘Polar bears are specially adapted to stay warm in the Arctic – their black skin soaks up the sun’s rays, while their thick, transparent fur even grows on the bottom of their paws to insulate them from the ice.’ (p 37) Research adaptation in animals.

## MARSUPIALS

**ACTIVITY:** ‘Marsupials are any members of the mammalian infraclass Marsupialia. All extant marsupials are endemic to Australasia and the Americas. A distinctive characteristic common to most of these species is that the young are carried in a pouch.’ (*Wikipedia*) Make a list of Australian marsupials, eg. Kangaroos, koalas, wallabies, little pygmy possums, bilbies and numbats. Research each of these creatures further.

**ACTIVITY:** Which marsupials live in the Americas? Which marsupials are endangered?

**ACTIVITY:** Research marsupials more closely.

## STUDY OF SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT

### CLIMATE CHANGE DEBATE

**ACTIVITY:** ‘Climate change’ is a controversial topic argued between those who believe that it will have an enormously detrimental impact on biodiversity and others who are sceptics or climate change deniers. Research this debate and write an essay outlining your findings.

**ACTIVITY:** Research the decline or endangered status of any species and what scientists say about the impact of climate change or pollution on that animal.

**DISCUSSION POINT:** What are governments doing to combat climate change?  
[See **Bibliography**.]

### PROTECTION OF WILDLIFE AND MORAL ISSUES

**ACTIVITY:** Some animals are considered **dangerous** because they inject venom or other poisons into their victims or spread disease (eg flying foxes). Research this topic further. Should we kill or remove such animals from their habitat simply because they pose a threat to human life?

**ACTIVITY:** Some animals are sometimes considered **pests**, by humans despite their treasured status. How do we balance the importance of a native animal in our ecosystem with their impact on our livestock, roads, homes or other infrastructure?



## VALUES

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Discuss the key values conveyed in this text.

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

The text of this book might be studied in relation to the following aspects:

**ACTIVITY:** The entries on each creature are written in third person, as an expository text. Invite students to create a classroom alphabet. Each student can select a letter, then make a list of a number of animals not included in this book. Then invite students to write a short expository text about any of these animals. There are different types of expository writing eg descriptive, sequential, cause/effect etc. [See **Bibliography** for examples of such texts.] [See also **Visual Literacy** exercise below.] [See also **Worksheet 2** below.]

**ACTIVITY:** Test your students' comprehension by asking them questions about the written text. [See also **Worksheet 4**.]

**ACTIVITY:** Invite students to write an acrostic poem using the letters in 'Aardvark'. [See **Bibliography**.]

**ACTIVITY:** Write a lyrical poem about an animal using models written by published poets to encourage students' expression. [See **Bibliography**.]

**ACTIVITY:** Read poems about animals. Then encourage students to write in a similar style about another animal.

**ACTIVITY:** First Nations peoples in many countries have sung about, painted, and told stories about animals for thousands of years. Read some in published picture books and discuss the animal facts revealed in these stories, eg. Misty Schroe's *Jumping Mouse: A Native American Legend of Friendship and Sacrifice* (Page Street Kids, 2019). [See **Bibliography**.]

**ACTIVITY:** Discover the collective nouns for some of the animals in this book. [See **Worksheet 6**.]

**ACTIVITY:** Invite students to write a simple story as the basis for a picture book about a favourite animal.

## VISUAL LITERACY

The visual text in this book combines with the written text to illustrate features of the various animals described.

**ACTIVITY:** The **cover** of the book depicts a range of animals encircling the book's title. What does this cover suggest to you about the book's content and emotional impact?

**ACTIVITY:** The **half-title** and **title page** contain text with a small bird perched on the word 'ultimate'. Design another appropriate title page.

**DISCUSSION POINT:** The **format** of the book allocates a page to each letter on which a number of animals are arranged haphazardly with captions. Create images to go with the various expository texts you created for your classroom alphabet. [See **English Language and Literacy** exercise above] Copy them and make them into a class alphabet book. [See also **Worksheet 2.**]

**ACTIVITY:** The **medium** employed is digital art. Jennifer draws on a Wacom Cintiq, starting with a simple line sketch drawn from looking at photographs then slowly adding detail and **colour**, effectively foregrounded on stark white backgrounds. Invite students to create a portrait of one of the animals they've researched in this medium and colour palette.

**ACTIVITY:** Create a **collage image** of an Elephant. [See **Worksheet 1.** below.]

**ACTIVITY:** Students might be encouraged to use critical literacy skills to unearth further meaning in this text. Encourage them to look closely at the images, to explain what they see, and then what the text says, and how the two texts add meaning to each other. [See also **Worksheet 3.**]

**ACTIVITY:** Invite students to illustrate the animal story they wrote under **English Language and Literacy** above. [Discuss the conventions of the picture book story format before embarking on this exercise.]

## **CREATIVE ARTS**

There are many creative activities suggested by this text:

**1. Craft:** Make a **model** of any of the animals included in this text, eg. A Cassowary. [See **Bibliography.**]

**2. Craft:** Create an **Animals Mobile.** [See **Worksheet 5.**] [See **Bibliography.**]

**3. Craft:** Create a mask of an **Animal.** [See **Bibliography.**]

**4. Music:** Discover **simple songs** about any of the animals in this book and share them with the class. To begin this activity, watch such videos as those produced by Bounce Patrol, which are very appropriate to this text:

'Bounce Patrol: Alphabet Animals - ABC Animal Songs for Kids ' *YouTube* November 18, 2017 <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_WpOvZnR\\_FM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_WpOvZnR_FM)>

'Bounce Patrol: Baby Shark' *YouTube* May 12, 2018 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j8z7UjET1Is>>

'Bounce Patrol: Do the Elephant - Healthy Habits- Nursery Rhymes & Kids Songs (The Jimmies Cover)' *YouTube* June 13, 2020 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h1H55Lio210>>

and other videos such as:

'Australian Animal Dance Songs Kids Kindergarten Preschoolers Exercise Music Song' *YouTube* November 2, 2011

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2Iym1A3RDw>>

'Kookaburra Song' *YouTube* July 25, 2015 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p2VitpGRalw>>

'Australian Animal Alphabet' *YouTube* November 26, 2018

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39Etm6s1Nho>>

Spencer, Don 'Australian Animal Songs' 1988. Available: <<https://itunes.apple.com/au/album/australian-animal-songs/1082248624>>

Then invite students to write and perform their own songs.

**5. Craft: Create a Diorama depicting a panda in its habitat.** [See **Bibliography** for relevant resources.]

**6. Script: Create a Book Trailer** to promote this book. [See **Bibliography** for relevant resources.]

## **LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES**

**ACTIVITY:** Research topics suggested in these notes online.

## **MATHEMATICS**

**ACTIVITY:** Have fun discovering mathematical facts about these animals.

## **FURTHER TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH**

- Research the work of Jennifer Cossins.
- Students might research this book in comparison to picture books and non-fiction books such as those listed in the **Bibliography**.
- Investigate any other topic suggested by this text.

## **CONCLUSION**

This beautifully designed and illustrated non-fiction text, like Cossins' previous titles, will encourage creative research into the animals of the world, and rich global biodiversity. It will teach students to observe and to protect wildlife. Her books are a catalogue of creative environmental resources which students will find just as entertaining as they are instructional.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR

**Jennifer Cossins** is a CBCA award-winning artist and writer with a passion for nature, the animal kingdom and all things bright and colourful. A born and bred Tasmanian, Jennifer also designs homewares, textiles and stationery, which she stocks in her store, Red Parka, in Hobart. Jennifer's other books include *101 Collective Nouns*, *A-Z of Endangered Animals*, *The Baby Animal Book*, *A-Z of Australian Animals*, *The Ultimate Animal Counting Book*, *A Flamboyance of Flamingos*, *The Mummy Animal Book* and *The Daddy Animal Book*.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE NOTES

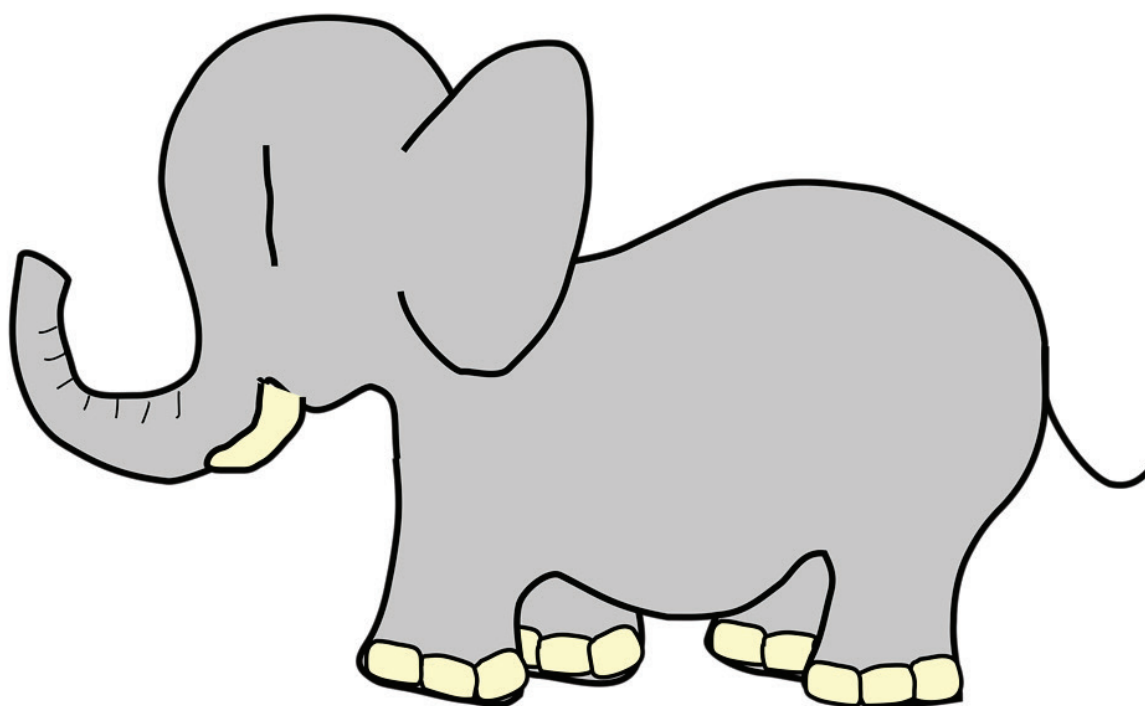
**Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright** operates justified text writing and publishing consultancy services, and is widely published on children's literature, publishing history and Australian fiction. In 2011 she was the recipient of the CBCA (Qld Branch) Dame Annabelle Rankin Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Queensland, and in 2012 the CBCA (National) Nan Chauncy Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Australia, and in 2014, the QWC's Johnno Award.



# WORKSHEETS

## WORKSHEET 1. CREATE A COLLAGE OF A CARTOON ELEPHANT

Enlarge this image to A3 on a photocopier and then encourage students to use a range of detailed materials, colour and texture, to make this collage, to achieve effect.



## **WORKSHEET 2. MAKE YOUR OWN ALPHABET OF ANIMALS**

Fill in the names of animals which don't appear in this book and then write one 'interesting fact' beside it. (Enlarge this sheet to A3 on a copier to give you more space.)

	<b>Animal</b>	<b>Interesting Fact</b>
<b>A</b>		
<b>B</b>	eg Bilby	
<b>C</b>		
<b>D</b>	eg Dassie or rock rabbit in Sout Africa	
<b>E</b>		
<b>F</b>		
<b>G</b>	eg Groundhog	
<b>H</b>		
<b>I</b>		
<b>J</b>		
<b>K</b>		
<b>L</b>		
<b>M</b>		
<b>N</b>		
<b>O</b>		
<b>P</b>		
<b>Q</b>		
<b>R</b>	eg Racoon	
<b>S</b>		
<b>T</b>		
<b>U</b>		
<b>V</b>		
<b>W</b>		
<b>X</b>		
<b>Y</b>		
<b>Z</b>		



# WORKSHEET 3. NAME THIS ANIMAL



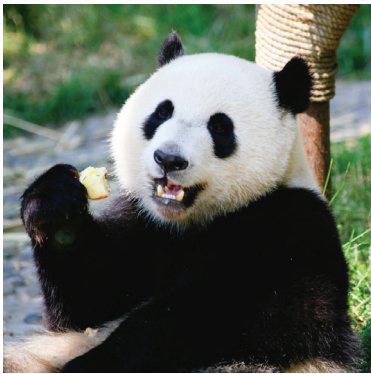
1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



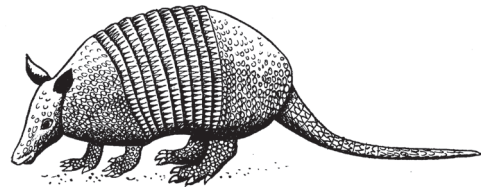
6.



7.



8.



9.

**Answers: 1. Orca. 2. Goldfish. 3. Moose. 4. Panda. 5. Giraffe. 6. Hermit crab. 7. Jaguar. 8. Kiwi. 9. Armadillo.**

# WORKSHEET 4. ANIMAL QUIZ

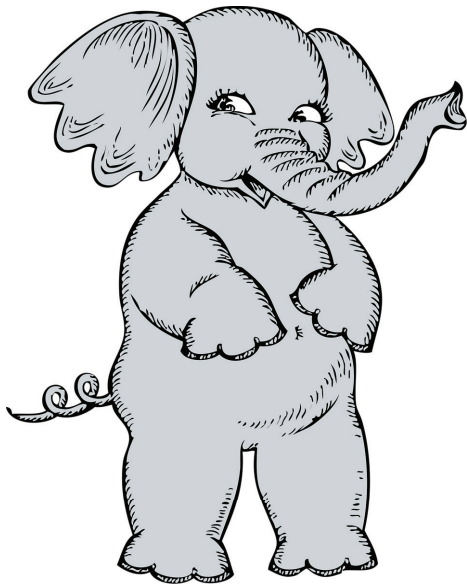
1. What is the largest land animal in the world?
2. What is the largest animal ever known to have lived?
3. What other names do cougars have?
4. What is the fastest land animal in the world?
5. What is a baby echidna called?
6. What is the derivation of the name ferret?
7. Where do Guinea pigs originate from?
8. Finish this sentence: 'The Indian elephant is one of three subspecies of Asian elephant, along with ....'
9. What surprising fact did you learn about lions in this book?
10. What does the platypus have in common with the echidna?
11. What is a baby puffin called?
12. What is misleading about the name of the Utah prairie dog?
13. What is special about the Wildebeest migration?
14. What is a xoloitzcuintli?
15. Where is the Zapata sparrow found?

**Answers:** 1. The African Elephant. (p 6) 2. The blue whale. (p 9) 3. 'Cougars are also known as panthers, pumas, mountain lions and catamounts depending on where you are in North or South America.' (p 10) 4. A cheetah. (p 11) 5. A puggle. (p 15). 6. 'The name 'ferret' comes from the Latin word for 'little thief'(p 17). 7. The Andes region of South America. (p 19) 8. 'the Sumatran and Sri Lankan elephants.' (p 22) 9. 'In a pride of lions, the lionesses do the hunting while the male lion protects the group by patrolling the territory.' (p 29) 10. 'The platypus is one of only two monotremes, or egg-laying mammals, in the world, along with the echidna.' (p 36) 11. A puffling. (p 37) 12. 'The Utah prairie dog is not a dog at all - it's a large rodent.' (p 47) 13. 'Wildebeest are known for their annual migration, where 1.5 million of them travel in a 1000-kilometre loop in search of new grasslands.' (p 51) 14. 'The xoloitzcuintli, also known as the Mexican hairless dog, has been around since ancient Aztec times and is thought to be one of the first dog breeds to be domesticated.' (p 52) 15. ' The Zapata sparrow is only found on the island of Cuba.' (p 57)



# WORKSHEET 5. ANIMALS MOBILE

Enlarge this sheet to A3 and stick to craft paper. Invite students to cut out the animals, and then attach to fishing line and hang from a straw, a metal hanger, or an embroidery hoop to create an animals mobile. [See 'How to make a Mobile' *Wikipedia* <<http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Mobile>>]





# WORKSHEET 6. ANIMALS COLLECTIVE NOUNS

1. A ..... of goldfish.
2. A ..... of zebras
3. A ..... of puffins.
4. A ..... of rhinoceroses.
5. A .... of badgers.
6. A ..... of baboons.
7. A ..... of cheetahs.
8. A ..... of giraffes.
9. A ..... of porcupines.
10. A ..... of seals.

**Answers:** 1. Troubling (p 19). 2. Dazzle. (p 57) 3. 'A group of puffins is known by a range of names – a colony, a puffinry, a circus, a burrow, a gathering, or an improbability. ('Puffin' *Oceanwide Expeditions* <<https://oceanwide-expeditions.com/to-do/wildlife/puffin>> 4. Crash. 5. Cete. 6. Flange (or Troop). 7. Coalition. 8. Tower. 9. Prickle. 10. Harem.



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*Quokkas and Quolls*

*Tree-kangaroos and Wallabies*

*Emus and Cassowaries*

Set 2 by Gallagher, Debbie:

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*Possums and Gliders*

*Devils and Dunnarts*

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## **OTHER TEACHING RESOURCES:**

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