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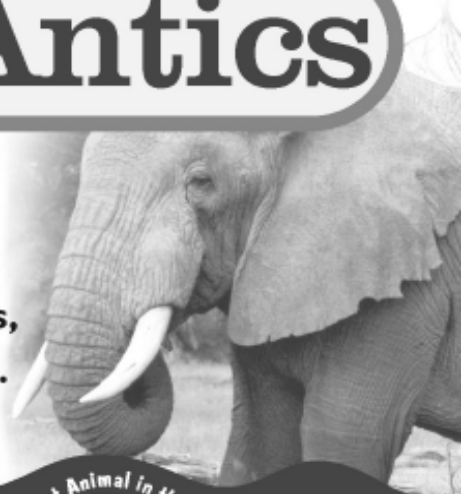
10+ years

Reading With Purpose



Animal Antics

Animal-themed reading and comprehension activities with a focus on consolidating word skills, writing strategies and reflection.



By Margaret Etherton



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Rationale

The animal kingdom is diverse, surprising and elaborate. Biodiversity, the interdependence of animals and plant life, and the life cycles of animals are important concepts for an understanding of environmental issues and problems. Many animals have endangered status and this situation may be directly or indirectly a result of human behaviour and practices. Their status may be extinct, endangered, critically endangered or at risk. Students are often unaware of what is being done and what can be done to help protect animals and the environment.

This book endeavours to enlighten students on some of the more unusual antics of animals. It includes articles on the strongest, greenest and the most slothful animals in the animal kingdom. Each story is taken from a slightly different slant. Biological concepts are covered such as animal classification, biodiversity, the web of life, nature's numbers, and animal survival strategies like camouflage, hibernation and adaptation.

Each animal article is followed by vocabulary, comprehension and writing activities. Animal-themed extension activities (Animal Fun) include drawing, designing tasks, games and posters. To follow up there is also a research task with specific websites or instructions on how to navigate the web using encyclopedias, search engines or appropriate key words. There is an emphasis on exploring the issues which threaten animal survival. The activities encourage students to think beyond application, knowledge and understanding to consider analysing, creating, synthesising and evaluating information.

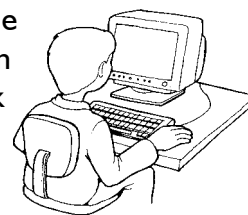
This book has been designed for use in the upper primary school classroom but it could equally be used by homeschoolers. A bibliography is included on Page 60 which contains details of reference materials and relevant websites.

Objectives

- To foster greater understanding of animal behaviours, habitats and survival techniques;
- To expand environmental, biological and animal vocabulary;
- To provide a range of written text types;
- To develop skills in critical thinking, analysis and comprehension;
- To foster an understanding of the impact of human behaviour and development on the lives of native animals in different parts of the world.

Website References

All websites listed in the **Reading With Purpose** series are linked from the Ready-Ed website listed below. This saves the teacher and/or student from typing in the addresses each time. External websites referred to in this book will be updated through the Ready-Ed site below should they disappear or modify their address after publication. Bookmark this site for ease of use:



www.readyed.com.au/urls/readers

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The Tiger from Tasmania

Millions of years ago in the darkest forests of Tasmania, there lived a strange creature. It was striped like a tiger, had a dog-shaped head, and hunted like a wolf in small family groups. But surprisingly, it fed its babies on milk and carried them in a pouch. What was this strange beast? It was a thylacine, sometimes called a “pouched wolf” or a “Tassie tiger”, the largest carnivorous marsupial in the world.

* * * * *

There is evidence to suggest that the native Tasmanian Aborigines hunted and ate thylacine meat. When the first European settlers arrived in Tasmania in 1803, they caught glimpses of this animal. Because it was killing their animals, the farmers killed it whenever they could. Sometimes the stories of its wild behaviour were exaggerated, but the settlers were scared.

* * * * *

The thylacine’s long, thin body was longer than a dog’s. Its head was fat and its tail was pointy, stiff, and shaped like a kangaroo’s tail. It was coloured yellow-brown with 15 to 20 dark stripes across its back that gave it camouflage like a tiger in dappled light under trees.

* * * * *

The thylacine was a marsupial like its near relatives who are still alive today. These include the quoll (a small cat-like

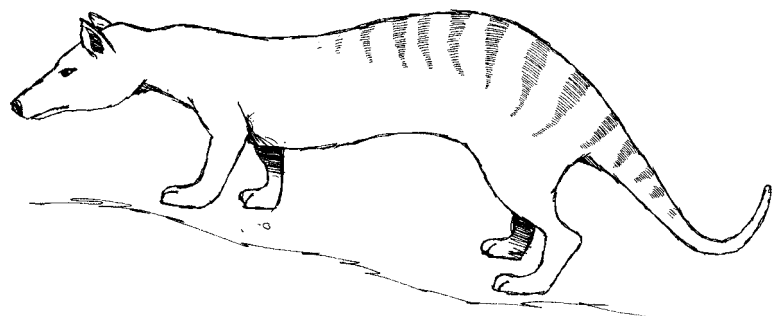
animal with pointy ears and nose) and the Tasmanian devil. The thylacine was the largest of all the carnivorous (meat-eating) marsupials. Its pouch opened up to protect the young, who were born tiny and hairless. The thylacine usually had three babies at a time. Six months later the mother left the “pups” in a safe place while she looked for food.

* * * * *

During the day the thylacine rested in the woodlands and at dusk it came out to hunt on the open grasslands. While hunting, the thylacine chased its prey to the point of exhaustion. Thylacines preferred to munch on wallabies, bandicoots, kangaroos, small rodents and birds. The thylacine didn’t run easily and when it trotted it looked very awkward.

* * * * *

At one time, thylacines were widespread over Australia, extending north to Papua New Guinea and south to Tasmania. The Aborigines painted their likeness on rocks in areas like the Kimberley in Western Australia. Also scientists have found fossils of many different species of thylacines all





The Tiger from Tasmania

over Australia. It is thought that the dingoes killed off all the thylacines on the mainland a long time ago. Within 100 years of the arrival of the European settlers however, all of the thylacines were dead in Tasmania as well. All that remains to tell us that the thylacine actually existed is a jerky film clip, some black and white photos, some floor rugs made from pelts, and several hundred museum specimens.

* * * * *

Why did the thylacine die out in Tasmania? Its habitat was destroyed by humans. Because farmers thought that thylacines were eating their sheep, the government paid money, called a *bounty*, for every animal killed. In the end the thylacine was hunted to death. It was a big mistake. Even though sometimes people often report seeing one in the distance, no one has been able to photograph or to prove that a thylacine still exists today. The thylacine is officially extinct since the last confirmed sighting was in 1936. It is unlikely that anyone will see the thylacine trot through the forest hunting for its dinner ever again. But if you go to Tasmania, you better take your camera and be on the lookout for this mysterious creature. After all there could be a reward for a good photograph!

* * * * *

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Bailey Jill, *Factfile of Mammals – 200 Mammals From Around the World*, Andromeda Oxford Ltd, 1996.
MacDonald Dr D, *The New Encyclopedia of Mammals*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
May J and Marten M, *The Book of Beasts*, New York: Viking Press, 1982.
Mammals, An Explore Your World Handbook, London: Discovery Books, 2000.

Internet Sources:

▶ www.dpiwe.tas.gov.au/inter.nsf/WebPages/BHAN-53777B?open ▶ www.austmus.gov.au/thylacine/02.htm

Fact File on the Thylacine:

Length

- 1 to 2 metres

Height

- 58 centimetres

Mass

- 20 – 25 kilograms

Fur colouring

- yellow-brown
- 13 – 20 black stripes

Eyes

- almond shaped

Habitat

- open forests
- grasslands
- thick rainforests

Diet

- wallabies
- kangaroos
- bandicoots
- small rodents
- birds

Special features

- small pouch to hold its babies
- carnivorous
- hunted at dusk
- nervous in captivity

Life span

- 5 to 7 years in the wild



Word Study

Match Up

Match the following words with their meanings:

- marsupial
- carnivorous
- existed
- widespread
- exhaustion
- hairless

tiredness _____ far and wide _____
 lacking hair _____ lived _____
 pouched animal _____ meat eating _____

Synonyms

Another stronger word for walk is **trot**. Unjumble these words to find synonyms for *walk*.

- OTTR _____
- SRLTLO _____
- AEENMDR _____
- IEKH _____
- RSEIDT _____
- EDTDOL _____
- SRNATEU _____
- BALME _____

Adjectives

Create a word bank below of adjectives to describe marsupials like the thylacine.

pouched	furry	

Word Search

- TROT •MARSUPIAL •TIGER •WOLF •THYLACINE
- EXTINCT •PHOTOGRAPH •BANDICOOT

E R V E O E P C U S N H H S
 T O M K X N H F L P Q P G T
 R V K Y H T J A F T B A C I
 O J B A N D I C O O T R V G
 T C F Y E P J N T L V G R E
 O K F O U L M W C F B O D R
 V X B S Y A O X U T M T P C
 H V R G X F K E D M D O W C
 S A P S E N I C A L Y H T V
 M N D F L O W P Z T W P Q Z

Prefixes

A base word is a word which can be made into another word by adding a prefix. For example mis + take = *mistake*. 'Mis' means *wrong* and 'un' means *not*. Use a / to divide these words into prefixes and base words, e.g. mis/take.

e.g. un/born	misguided	misuse
mischief	unbent	unplanned
misheard	unwise	untidy
undeveloped	uneven	misspent
unbent	misconduct	unhappy

Dictionary – Use a dictionary to find the meaning of these words:

fossils _____
 exaggerated _____
 specimens _____
 extinction _____



Comprehension

Understanding the Text

Which animals does a thylacine look like?

What are the various names given to the thylacine?

How did the thylacine become extinct?

What is a bounty? Why did the government offer a bounty?

What evidence is around today to prove that the thylacine once existed? List at least four things.

True or False

A baby giraffe can splay its legs.

True False

Thylacines preyed on bandicoots.

True False

One of the closest living relatives to a thylacine is a cat.

True False

Baby thylacines are very hairy.

True False

Carnivorous means meat-eating.

True False

The thylacine is a type of wolf.

True False

Animal Fun

Complete the following fact file for yourself as an example of a human:

● Length _____ ● Height _____ ● Mass _____

● Hair colouring _____ ● Eye colouring _____

● Habitat _____

● Diet _____

● Special features _____

● Life span _____

Creative Fun

➔ Imagine humans had to have camouflage to survive. What would humans look like? On another sheet of paper, draw a person with camouflage on.

➔ Sometimes there is a reward for finding evidence that the thylacine still exists – it could be a photograph or a paw print. On a piece of art paper, draw a poster offering a reward for finding evidence of a thylacine.



Reflection

Reflection on Animal Survival

What advantage is there in having a striped back?

What other types of camouflage can animals have to help them to hide? Give examples.

How do you think the thylacine could have been saved?

What measures can people take to make sure that other marsupials in the wild, such as the **Tasmanian devil**, **Eastern quoll** or the **Southern hairy-nosed wombat**, do not become extinct?

Using a mind map brainstorm a campaign to help one of these animals from becoming extinct.



Compare these marsupials: **THYLACINE**, **KOALA** and **KANGAROO**.

How are they the same? How are they different? How does having a pouch help them to survive?

THYLACINE	KOALA	KANGAROO

Research

Find another animal which has become extinct in the last few hundred years and write a report on it. For example: dodo, American passenger pigeon, Darling Downs hopping mouse, and Arabian gazelle. Write down what was special about the animal, how it became extinct and why it was hunted.

▶ www.redlist.org (Redlist of endangered species)

▶ amonline.net.au/mammals/rare/index.htm (database of extinct Australian mammals)

Story Writing

Write a story about finding a tiger and collecting \$1 million reward. Start with a setting, a character (you), and a problem. What difficulties did you have? Where did you look? What did the countryside look like? How did you find the tiger? What did you do with the reward money?

Reading

To find out more about the thylacine and to view some rare film of the animal when it was alive go to: ▶ www.naturalworlds.org/thylacine/index.htm