

SHORT-BEAKED ECHIDNA



Description

Short-beaked Echidnas are covered with long, brown-black and golden spines. Under the spines, the echidna's body is covered with fur. Its long, tubular and toothless snout is naked. The tongue is long and sticky and is around 18 cm long.

Scientific Name

Tachyglossus aculeatus

Conservation Status

Extinct

Extinct in the Wild

Critically Endangered

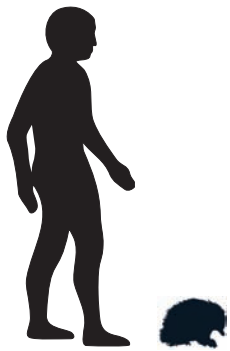
Endangered

Vulnerable

Near-Threatened

Least Concern

Data Deficient



Body Length: 30–45 cm

Weight: 2–7 kg

Gestation: 23 days

Number of young: 1



Distribution ■

Distribution: Australia

Habitat: All habitats

Diet

The Short-beaked Echidna is an **insectivore** and eats ants and termites. The echidna digs its way into ant or termite nests with its front paws and extends its long, sticky tongue into the nest. The insects stick to the tongue and are drawn into its mouth where they are crushed up.

In the wild

Echidnas are one of only two mammals that lay eggs. The baby hatches after 10 days and is carried around by the mother for two months in a pouch-like skin fold. This baby is called a 'puggle'. The mother carries the baby around until its spines start to develop at which point it deposits it in a specially constructed nursery burrow. The mother returns to feed it approximately every 3–6 days.

Threats

There are no significant predators of adult echidnas, but dingos will occasionally eat them. The spiny coat provides an excellent defence. When disturbed, the echidna curls into a spiky ball. When attacked, it may dig very quickly and bury itself in the soil.

At Perth Zoo

Perth Zoo houses a number of echidnas in the **Australian Bushwalk** in an exhibit sponsored by Termimesh.

Did you know?

Each spine is formed from a single hair.

Echidnas and platypuses are monotremes. This means that they are mammals that lay eggs.

