

Andy the Ant's Arid Adventures

South Australian Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board



About the South Australian Arid Lands Region

The South Australian Arid Lands Region makes up **half** the area of SA. It includes some of the driest parts of the State.

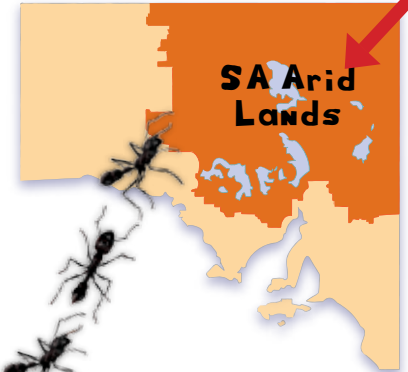
Much of the land is healthy and the people living here work hard to look after it. There are plants and animals that live here that are found nowhere else in Australia or even the world. The desert environment can often go through huge weather events such as long droughts or major floods. Many animals depend upon floods for their survival. Floods bring new food supplies and much more plant growth which help to support more animals.

For such a big area not many people live here – less than 2% of South Australians! Sheep and cattle farmers (pastoralists) are the main land users in the region covering 409,000km².

There are 12 land holdings under Aboriginal management or co-management and **mining** and petroleum companies are becoming bigger land users here.

We also have conservation reserves, National Parks and two great inland water systems: the Lake Eyre Basin and the **Great Artesian Basin**.

The Great Artesian Basin formed between 100 and 250 million years ago!





Robby the Rascally Rabbit

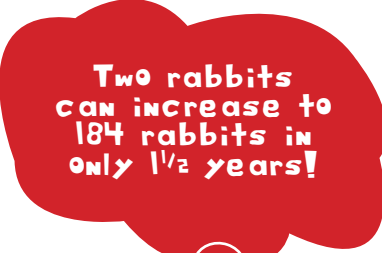
I'm Robby the Rascally Rabbit. I'm a pest animal that lives in Australia which means that I do not belong here! I love eating all sorts of plants like **chenopods** (saltbush and bluebush) and digging holes.

When I get hungry I'm quite happy to eat every bit of a plant – from top to bottom! I'll even eat right down to the roots if there's nothing around. I don't need to find puddles to drink from because I get plenty of water from the plants I eat.

I don't care if I don't leave enough food for other little native animals to eat. You snooze you lose!

Speaking of snoozing, the best place for a home is in the cool of an underground warren. I like to build my home on solid ground and not in soft sand like **sand dunes**. Sometimes farmers fill in our homes. It seems that when we dig holes to make our homes we stop plants from growing. It does get a bit bare where we have lots of **warrens** in one place. On windy days it is dusty because all the top **soil** blows away. Humans call this **erosion**.

When it is hot and dry, many animals have trouble keeping big families but we become quite **abundant** – this just means there's a lot of us. In a drought we go on a bit of a diet but we can survive until the next good rains. When times are good again we have more babies. I told you we like big families!



Two rabbits
can increase to
184 rabbits in
only 1½ years!





Robby's Activity Page



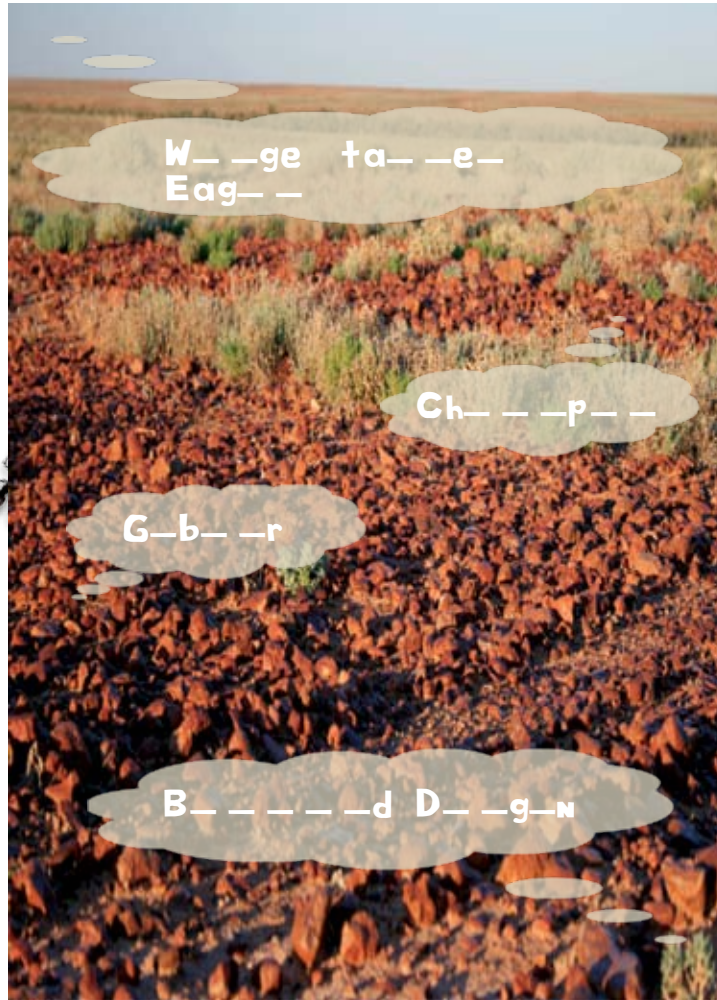
Travel Tip:
Please don't litter
the Arid Lands.
Take all of your
rubbish with you
when you leave.

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

ABUNDANT
INTRODUCED
ADAPTIVE
PEST ANIMAL
BIG FAMILY
RABBIT
COMPETITIVE
SOIL
DESTRUCTIVE
SPREAD WEEDS
EROSION
SURVIVAL
ERADICATE
WARREN
FORAGES

Gibber (Stony) Plains Habitat

What can you find
in Gibber Habitat?



When handled
legless lizards can
make a high-pitched
squeak and drop
their tails.





Camilla Camel

I'm Camilla Camel. I'm also a pest animal that lives in Australia and like Robby the Rascally Rabbit I don't belong here. You may have seen me walking over **sand dunes** and in **gibber** country in the arid lands of South Australia, the Northern Territory or Western Australia. I can also be seen walking through **spinifex** country, where Garry the **goanna** hunts for food too. Spinifex is a grass that is common to the arid lands.

Many years ago some people thought that camels might work really well in the huge, dry, arid lands of Australia. **Camels** and their riders were brought out from places like Afghanistan. My ancestors carried supplies for explorers. They loved us because they didn't have to feed and water us every day.

I can drink 30-40 litres of water all by myself... everyday! Sometimes when I find a good waterhole or **creek** I make a big mess. I **muddy** up the water and even use the creeks and waterholes as a toilet! I don't mind drinking muddy water but other animals like it clean, so they have to find somewhere else to drink.

I have over one **million** brothers and sisters throughout Australia. People consider us one of the most damaging pests in the country because we are fussy eaters and only choose the nicest **vegetation** to eat. My big soft padded feet can cause damage to the soil, and when I'm with a big group of mates I knock down fences and cause lots of damage to towns and properties – nothing will stop me getting to food or water!

Today people are trying to manage our population so we don't breed like Robby the Rascally Rabbit.



Camels can
wander up to
70km a day!

Camilla's Activity Page

Camilla Camel is an expert desert dweller. To be able to survive in the desert she has to be very good at storing water. A camel can go two weeks without water, relying on plants and their hump for moisture. A camel's hump will get **smaller** when they can't find enough plants to eat.

Make a list of the things you could use on your camping trip to capture water.

1. Look for low lying areas like creek lines



A thirsty camel
can drink about
100 litres of
water in a couple
of minutes!

Leguminosae
(family name)

leg-u-min-o-sa

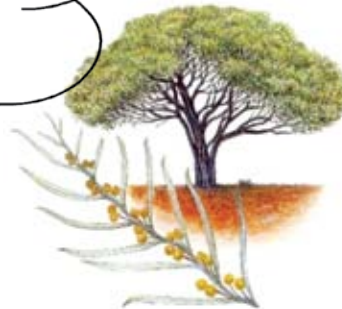
Acacia papyrocarpa
(species name)

Western Myall
(common name)

3 Ideas or less
Good

8 Ideas or less
Great

12 Ideas or more
Fantastic

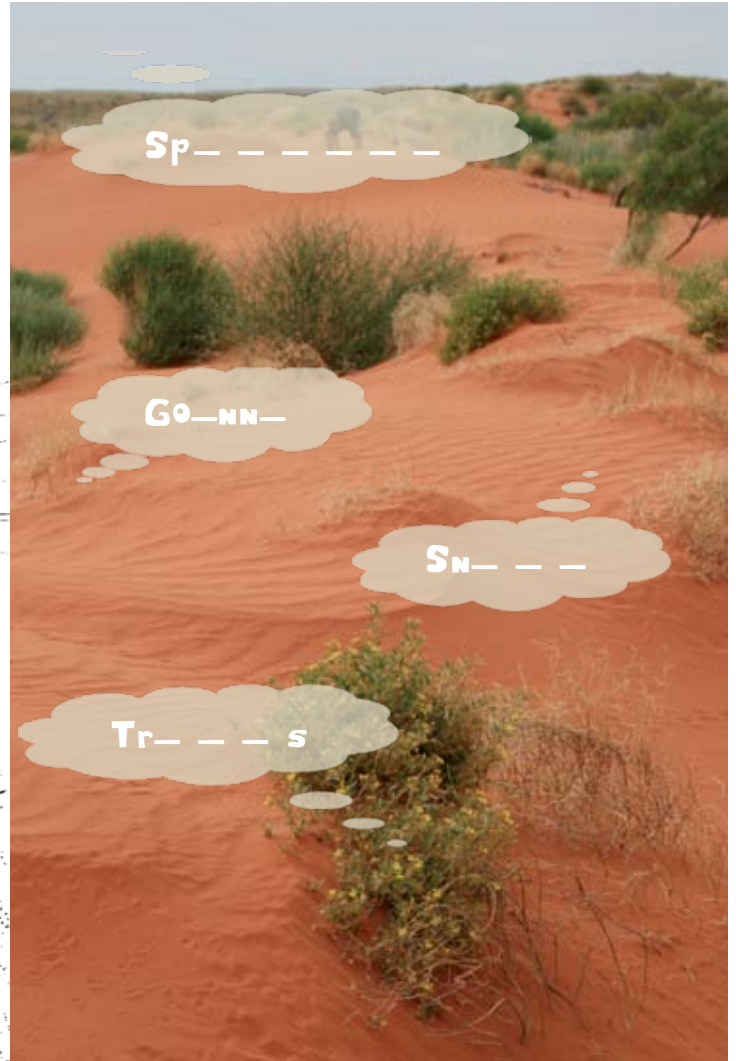


Sand Dunes Habitat

What would you
find in a Sand
Dune Habitat?



Nearly one sixth
of Australia
drains into
Lake Eyre.



Sp_ _ _ _ _

Go_ _ _ _

Sn_ _ _

Tr_ _ _ s

Barry the Bearded Dragon

I'm Barry the **Bearded Dragon**. I'm a native animal which means I belong in Australia. I puff out my '**beard**' to look fierce to other animals. Just between you and me I'm actually quite **gentle**.

When the Sun is up out here in the arid part of South Australia you can often see me walking through **gibber** or crossing over **sand dunes**. Perhaps you've noticed my **tracks**?

I'm not a fussy eater. In fact I'm what's known as an **omnivore**. That just means that I like to eat plants as well as insects and worms. Sometimes it can be hard to find the food I like. Like most other native animals here I have to compete for my food with pest animals like Robby the Rascally **Rabbit** and his mates!

When I'm not eating I spend much of the day in saltbushes (**chenopods**) or trees like Western Myall. They can be hard to find sometimes because campers cut them down and use them for firewood.

I love to **bask** in the sunshine! You'll find me lying on a rock or maybe even on the road so watch out for me! I'm **cold-blooded** which means I need the sun to warm up my body **temperature** so I can get moving.



Get out of your car and look closely. You'll be amazed at all the plants and animal tracks you'll find.





Barry's Activity Page



Chenopod (family name) Keen-o-pod

Atriplex vesicaria
(species name)

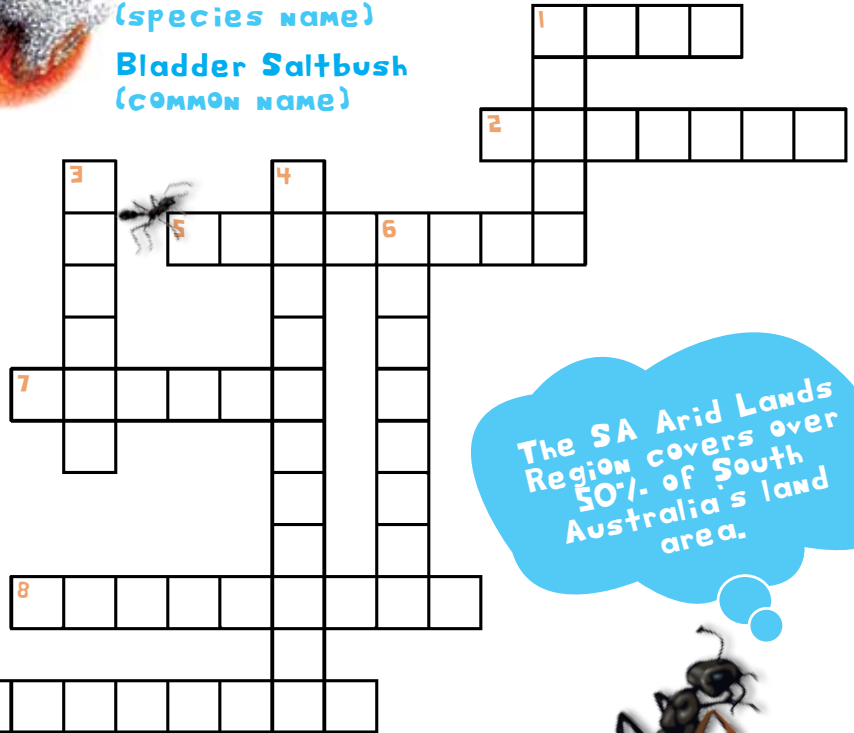
Bladder Saltbush
(common name)

Across

1. I do this on a rock or on the road to keep warm.
2. I compete with these pests for food.
5. Saltbush.
7. Opposite of fierce.
8. If you look closely you might be able to see my footprints in these.
9. I need to be warmed up by the sun because I'm...?

Down

1. I puff this out to look scary to other animals.
3. You might see me walk through this during the day.
4. The sun warms up my body _____.
6. What kind of animal eats plants and insects?



The SA Arid Lands Region covers over 50% of South Australia's land area.



Sudoku Letters

Sudoku is a Japanese number puzzle.

In our puzzles we have swapped the numbers for letters – but the rules are the same.

Each row, column and box must have only **one** of each letter.

One centimetre
of soil might
take 200 years
to make!



D			
	D		
E			D

E			M
	M		
		U	
			S

Sudoku 1

Each row, column and box must contain the letters: **DUNE**

Sudoku 2

Each row, column and box must contain the letters: **ARID**

	A	D	
	I		
A	D		

Sudoku 3

Each row, column and box must contain the letters: **EMUS**



Wanda the Wedge-tailed Eagle

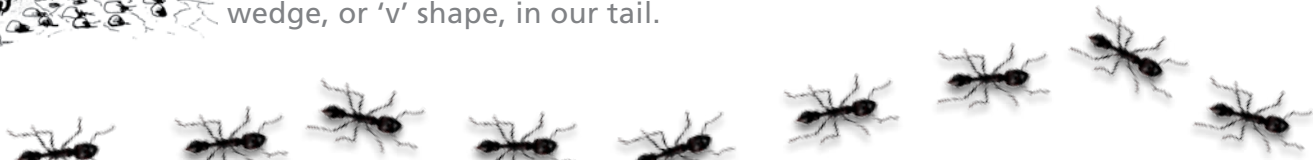
Be careful when collecting firewood. Those logs and branches are homes to lots of different wildlife.

I'm Wanda the Wedgie. I'm also a native animal and belong in Australia just like Barry the Bearded Dragon. My mate is Wilson the **Wedge-tailed Eagle**. Once we found each other we knew we'd stay together for life. I'm a bit bigger and heavier than Wilson. I weigh about four kilograms and when I spread out my wings they are over two metres wide!

Wilson and I hunt for food by ourselves, with a friend or sometimes in a big group. If a few of us get together we might chase a kangaroo and kill it for food but it's easier to eat dead animals from the road – you don't have to waste energy trying to catch and kill them! My favourite food is rabbits but I will also kill foxes and feral cats. Feral cats eat far too many native birds and lizards – so I'm good for the environment!

As a **protected** animal pastoralists help to look after our nests. Our nests are really big platforms of dead sticks – we can make them two metres wide and three metres deep! Wilson and I put nice fresh sticks and leaves in the middle of the nest to make it comfy for our chicks. We only have babies once a year and usually no more than three eggs.

You will sometimes see us gliding over **gibber** plains, using the air currents as a free ride. We can get as high as 2000 metres above the ground, as high as Mount Kosciuszko! When we are a bit closer you'll know it's us because of the wedge, or 'v' shape, in our tail.



Dot-to-Dot and Colour In



The Inland Taipan has the most potent venom of any land snake on Earth (fortunately it's quite shy but extreme caution should always be taken).





Bud _ _ _s

Cr _ _ k

Tad _ _ l _s

Roc _ _

Creek or Flood Plain Habitat

What would you find
in a Creek Habitat?



Travel Tip: Take
care when driving on
outback roads. You're
sharing the road with
trucks, cyclists,
people and animals.



Pete and Pam the Pastoralists

We're Pete and Pam the Pastoralists. We used to own **sheep** stations in the Gawler Ranges and Flinders Ranges but now we own and manage a big cattle station in the far north of South Australia. A cattle station is like a big farm for cows!

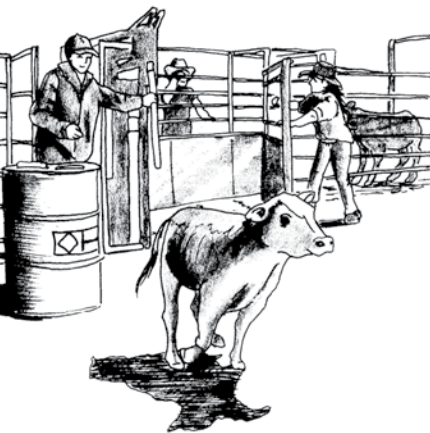
When our **cows** are fat and healthy we take them to market to sell. Each cow can sell for \$400-\$900! This is how we earn our money to live on. The meat ends up in the supermarket and then on your plate at home.

To make sure our cows are fat and healthy we have to make sure our land is healthy too. Animals like **camels** and **rabbits** will eat the same grass that our cows eat. If there are too many of these pest animals around we can't feed as many cows.

Most days we go for a drive around our property to check on a few things. Our cows are just like any pet you have. They need food and water and you need to keep them in a yard. We make sure the water troughs have clean water and also look for holes in any of the fences. They need to be fixed, or our cows will wander into our neighbours' place.

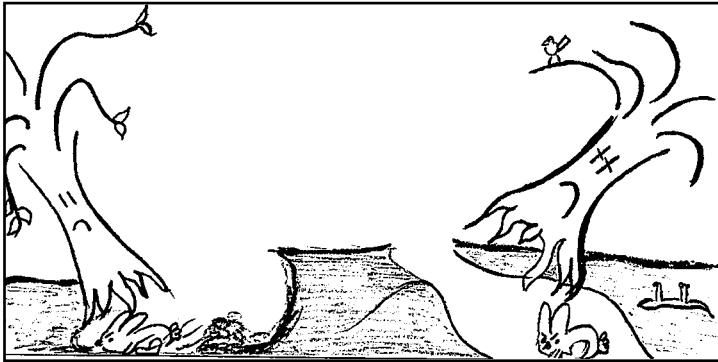
We check the paddocks to make sure there are enough grasses and other **vegetation** for our cows to eat. If there aren't many plants left we move them to another paddock. If we let the cows eat everything, the land will be overrun with rabbits, the trees will die, and there will be bare soils that will wash away when we get rain or blow away in a dust storm. We need to plant trees and let some bushes make seeds so they can spread naturally.

You're not the first one here! The route you're travelling was probably first followed by Aboriginal people many thousands of years ago.



Looking after the Land

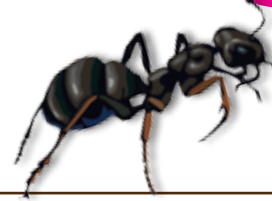
Look at what can happen if there are too many rabbits, foxes and camels.



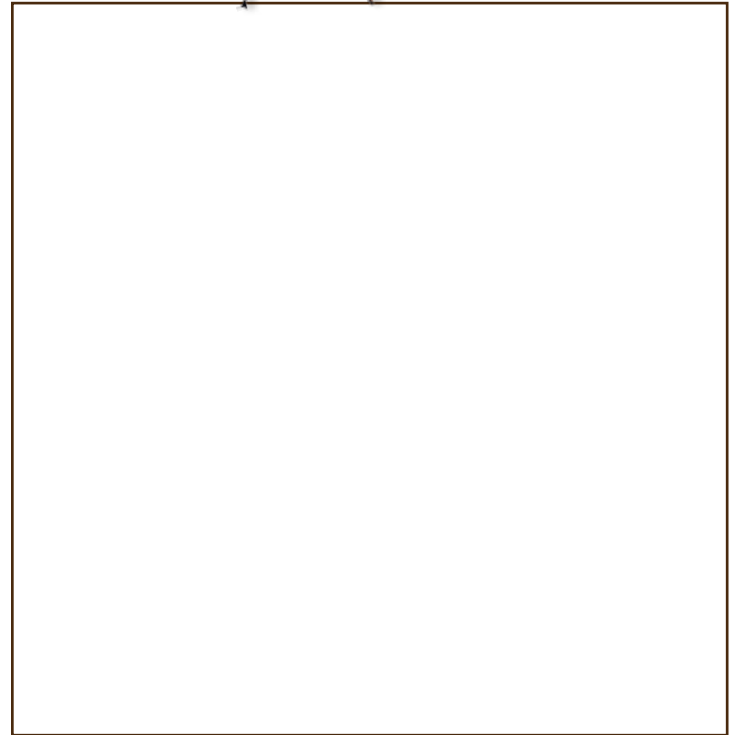
How would you fix your land if it looked like this?

Draw a new picture of how the landscape looked before it became this degraded.

You could draw in healthy trees or move the rabbits out of their homes and maybe the lizard will find a new home...











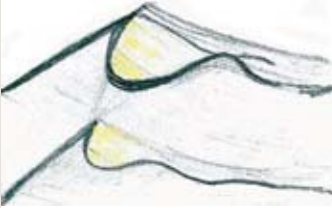
Did you know
Emus can
swim?

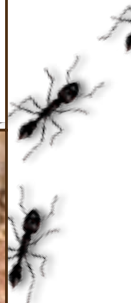


SPOT-O-CARDS

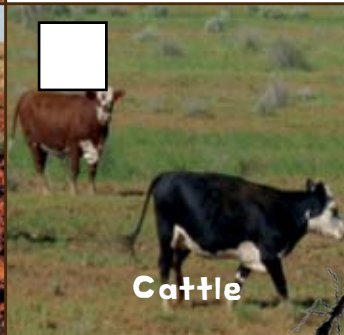
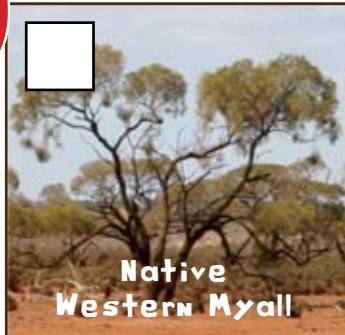
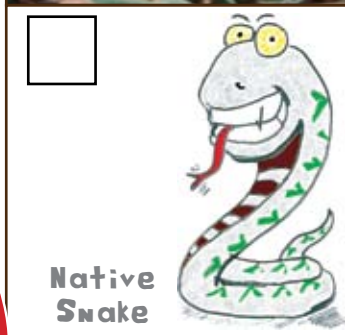
Take a look at the Arid Land plants and animals and tick the boxes when you see them...
Good luck !

Travel Tip:
Don't drop your litter in our homes. Please take it with you and put it in the bin.

<input type="checkbox"/> Pest Rabbit 	<input type="checkbox"/>  Native Bearded Dragon	<input type="checkbox"/> Pest Camel 
<input type="checkbox"/>  Creek	<input type="checkbox"/> Sheep 	<input type="checkbox"/>  Native Wedge-tailed Eagle
<input type="checkbox"/> Native Kangaroo 	<input type="checkbox"/>  Erosion	<input type="checkbox"/> Sand Dunes 



SPOT-O-CARDS

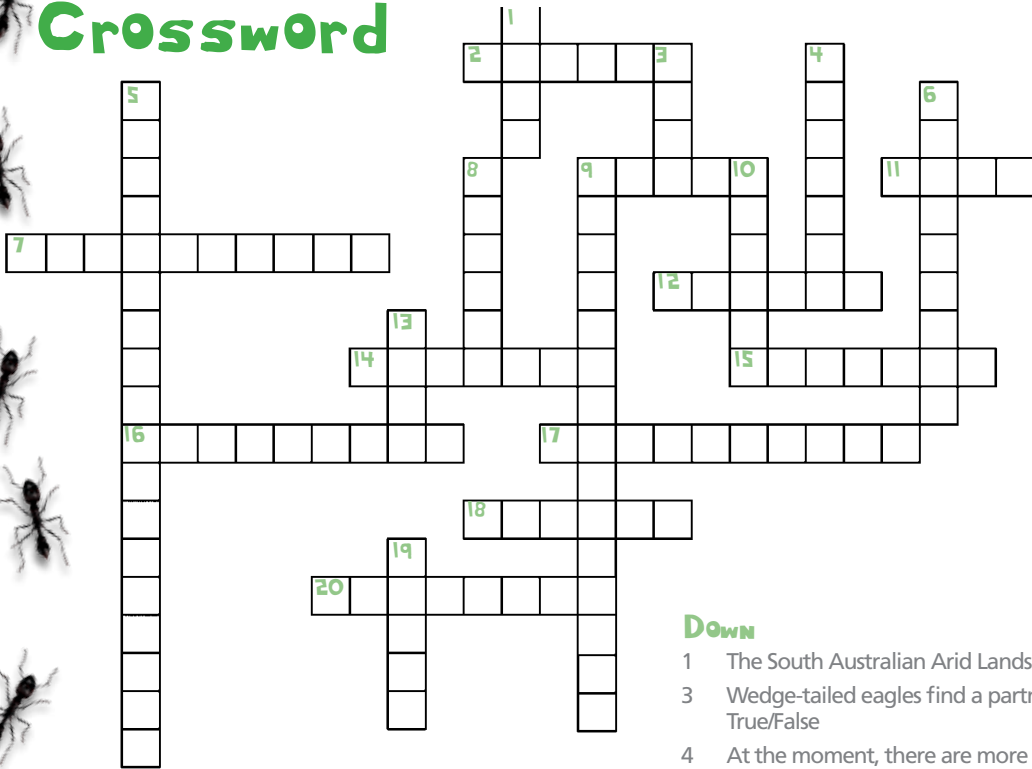


There are over 100 bird species that rely on the Cooper Creek and Coongie Lakes area.





Crossword



Across

- 2 Too many _____ warrens cause the soil to blow and wash away easily.
- 7 Rabbits are a _____ meaning they don't belong in Australia.
- 9 Main animals stocked in the Flinders & Gawler Ranges.
- 11 Main animals stocked in the far north of South Australia.
- 12 Land use near Roxby Downs.
- 14 _____ are dug by rabbits.
- 15 A camel's hump will get _____ when they can't find enough plants to eat.
- 16 Main land form in the Simpson Desert.
- 17 Pastoralists check paddocks to make sure there is enough grasses and other _____ for the sheep and cows to eat.
- 18 _____ eat a lot of food, drink a lot of water and can damage or knock down fences.
- 20 There are lots of rabbits, you can say they are a _____.

Down

- 1 The South Australian Arid Lands region covers an area _____ of the size of the State.
- 3 Wedge-tailed eagles find a partner and keep this partner for life.
True/False
- 4 At the moment, there are more than 1 _____ wild camels in Australia.
- 5 A huge inland, underground water system.
- 6 Wedge-tailed eagles are a _____ animal.
- 8 Stony Plains.
- 9 A pea flower found after rain in the Arid Lands region.
- 10 Rabbits get water from _____ they eat.
- 13 _____ Eyre, is near William Creek.
- 19 Camels can make waterholes _____.

**Find the answers
to the quizzes
on our website**

www.saalnrm.sa.gov.au

Further information

Andy the Ant's Arid Adventures is a fun activity pad to help school-aged kids understand the natural resources of the amazing South Australian Arid Lands Region.

Your comments and feedback are welcome and can be left on our website.

Visit our website for more information about rare and threatened plants and animals or download our free school-based education kit filled with hundreds of teaching ideas and local photos.

Andy the Ant's Arid Adventures was prepared by Louise Gavin and Lisa Stevens (South Australian Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board) with assistance from the SA Tourism Commission.

References

www.australian-aridlands-botanic-garden.org

Drawings by Melissa Cox

www.mtdare.com.au

'Robby the Rascally Rabbit' image by Michel Gagné

www.gagneint.com

GAGNÉ International LLC

Graphic design by elevenacross pty ltd

www.elevenacross.com.au



Government of South Australia

South Australian Arid Lands Natural
Resources Management Board

Produced May 2011

© South Australian Arid Lands Natural
Resources Management Board