



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. Aboriginal people lived in this region long before people travelled in utes, trains and planes.

Aboriginal people have a connection to Country that defines their cultural beliefs. In the SA Arid Lands there are many different Aboriginal lands and we acknowledge their connection to the land we are visiting. It's helpful to think of it like you are a guest at a birthday party and you would say thank you for having me.

Sheep and cattle farmers (pastoralists) are the main land users in the region, covering about 400,000km² – that's bigger than the size of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane combined.

Other land is used for National Parks and conservation reserves and some is used by renewable energy, mining and petroleum companies.

Even in the desert, people have access to water, but out here it comes from under the ground and has been there since the time of the dinosaurs.



This is a map of the
SA Arid Lands and
includes Traditional
Owner Native Title areas.
It's a vast area which
covers more than half of
South Australia!





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.

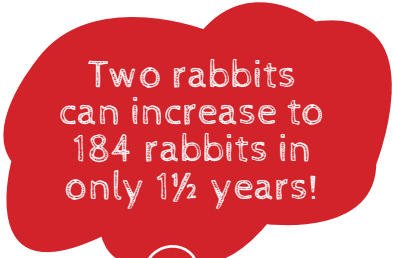
I don't care if I don't leave enough food for other little native animals to eat. You snooze you lose!

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

C	E	U	D	N	F	M	F	Z	M	O	S	D	T	S	ABUNDANT
E	O	T	S	R	O	S	S	J	Q	P	S	E	O	E	INTRODUCED
B	C	M	A	U	Y	I	M	O	R	T	D	C	R	G	ADAPTIVE
M	H	H	P	C	R	T	S	E	I	P	E	U	A	A	PEST ANIMAL
E	W	V	J	E	I	V	A	O	H	L	S	D	D	R	BIG FAMILY
Q	H	T	Y	B	T	D	I	S	R	L	T	O	A	O	RABBIT
N	I	Q	B	R	W	I	A	V	E	E	R	R	P	F	COMPETITIVE
Q	F	A	N	E	V	W	T	R	A	U	U	T	T	G	SOIL
T	R	D	E	K	O	O	Y	I	E	L	C	N	I	S	DESTRUCTIVE
T	D	D	W	A	R	R	E	N	V	E	T	I	V	C	SPREAD WEEDS
P	S	T	N	A	D	N	U	B	A	E	I	Z	E	S	EROSION
L	A	M	I	N	A	T	S	E	P	P	V	P	Z	C	SURVIVAL
B	I	G	F	A	M	I	L	Y	S	A	E	T	Z	P	ERADICATE
T	R	C	X	D	W	W	U	A	S	X	C	G	U	J	WARREN
T	I	V	X	O	C	C	L	C	E	Z	R	Y	D	V	FORAGES

TRAVEL TIP

Please don't litter the
Arid Lands, take all of
your rubbish with you
when you leave.



Gibber (stony) Plains Habitat

Gibbers are small polished rocks or pebbles that have come from under the ground and have been smoothed out by years of wind and rain.

They come in lots of different colours and protect the ground underneath from erosion.

What can
you find in
Gibber Habitat?

W _ _ ge ta _ _ e _ Eag _ _

K _ w _ _ _

G _ b _ _ r

ch _ _ _ p _ _

Hello Keith here. Yes down here in my burrow. I am a Kowari and I am endangered. I hunt for my prey at night - bugs, lizards, birds, you name it! This makes me a nocturnal carnivore. I live on Stony plains where I am under threat from rabbits, cats and large animals that flatten my home. I might be small, but I am mighty.





Camels can
wander up to
70km a day!



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.

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 300,000 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.



A close-up photograph of a black ant crawling on a horizontal line. The ant is positioned on the line, with its legs and antennae visible. The line is a solid black line, and the background is a light, textured surface.



Acacia papyrocarpa
(species name)

Western Myall
(common name)

12 Ideas or more

Fantastic






Fiesty Fred the Feral Cat

Lots of people own cats as pets but did you know that the biggest threat to our small native animals are feral cats? Usually no bigger than a house cat, but they can appear different and are unowned.

To survive well in the wild, Feral cats have simple coat patterns (tabby or black). Sometimes, as male feral cats are not de-sexed they can grow into gigantic tom-cats.

Feral cats can be found all over Australia from Sand Dunes to Gibber Plains and everything in between and have broad diets, from Bilbies, animals in trees to reptiles such as Barry the Bearded Dragon.

Cats can climb, hide and sneak up on animals in the bush without them knowing. They are really good at hunting and are really smart. In the deserts, cats travel huge distances to where there has been recent rain.



To help friends like Barry the Bearded Dragon and Keith the Kowari, make sure that your pet cat is desexed and kept inside.



Sand Dunes Habitat

The **sand dunes** you see in our desert areas were formed thousands of years ago and while they don't really move, the peaks at the top can change regularly with the wind and rain. The flat areas between them are called swales.

Sand dunes provided comfortable and sheltered campsites for Aboriginal people who could find food and timber here.

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

What would you find in a Sand Dune Habitat?

Sp_ _ _ _ _

Go_ nn_

Sn_ _ _

Tr_ _ _ s

Barry the Bearded Dragon

I'm Barry the **Bearded Dragon**. I'm a protected 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**.

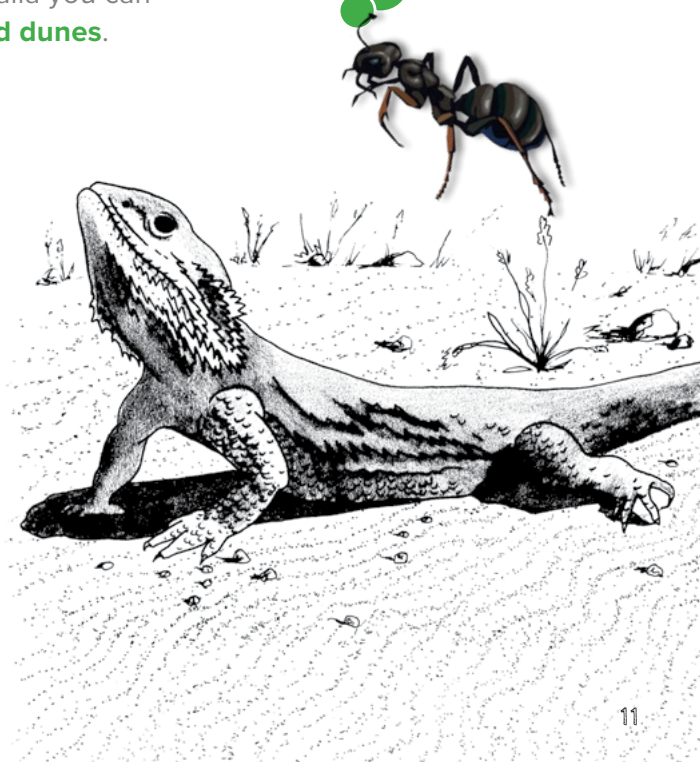
When the sun is up out here in the arid part of South Australia you can often see me walking through **gibber** or crossing over **sand dunes**. Perhaps you've noticed my **tracks**?

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.

Nearly one sixth of Australia drains into Kati-Thanda-Lake Eyre.





Barry's activity page



Chenopod (family name)
Keen-o-pod

Atriplex vesicaria
(species name)

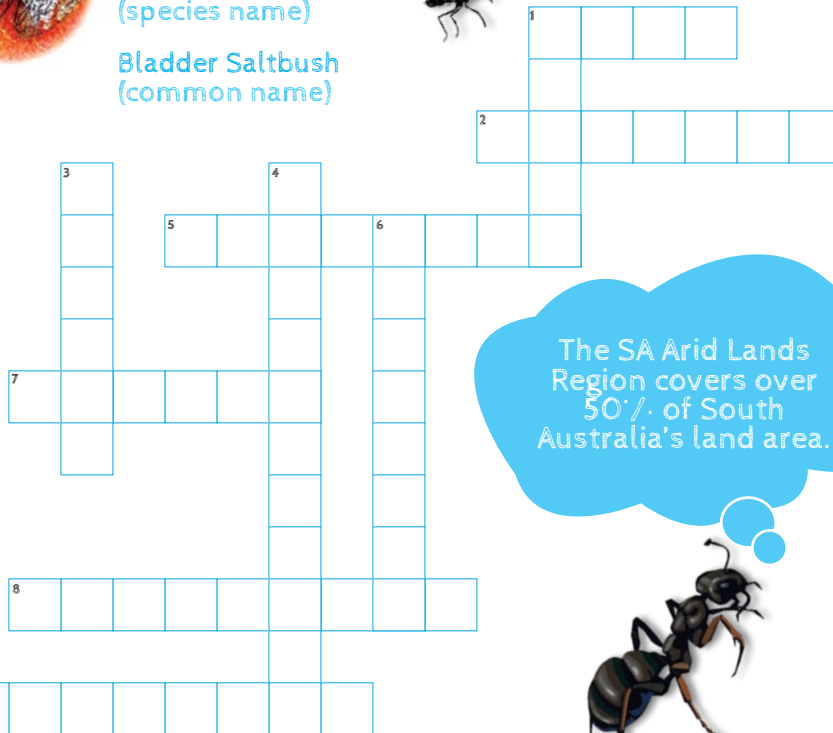
Bladder Saltbush
(common name)

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**

The page is decorated with various illustrations. At the top right, a line of five ants marches across the page. On the left side, there are several white footprints of different sizes, some of which are part of a larger, faint line drawing of a person's legs and feet. At the bottom left, a large, detailed ant is shown. A green speech bubble is positioned near the bottom left, containing text about staying on track and observing. The title 'Regina and Russell the Rangers' is written in a green, textured font at the top center.

Regina and Russell the Rangers

As Aboriginal Rangers, Regina and Russell's work is all about looking after **Country**. They do this by protecting animals, finding medicines and looking after cultural sites.

Rangers are connected to everything that makes up Country, and some look after certain animals, that are vulnerable, threatened, or endangered. To protect them, rangers control pest animals like cats, goats and camels, and weeds like **Buffel grass**.

To help Regina and Russell, remember to stay on track and observe but not collect artefacts.

They believe that when Country is healthy, then people are healthy too.

Fire is an important tool that rangers use to look after Country. Burning small fires on Country protects the animals and plants, and keeps Country healthy and safe.

Rangers also care for cultural sites on their Country, like meeting places of their ancestors or sites of their **Dreamtime** stories. Most of these sites are protected and not open to the public.

Passing down knowledge is an important part of being a ranger, too. Rangers like us have been passing down knowledge for thousands of years and many **generations**, and they keep this happening so future generations can continue to look after Country, too.



Wanda the Wedge-tailed Eagle

I'm Wanda the Wedgie. I'm also a protected 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! Keep an eye out for me when driving and ask your mum and dad to slow down if you see me.

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!

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.

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



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

Most creeks in arid regions are usually dry, until it rains. Even a little bit of rain can cause these creeks to flood.

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



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



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 \$2000! 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.

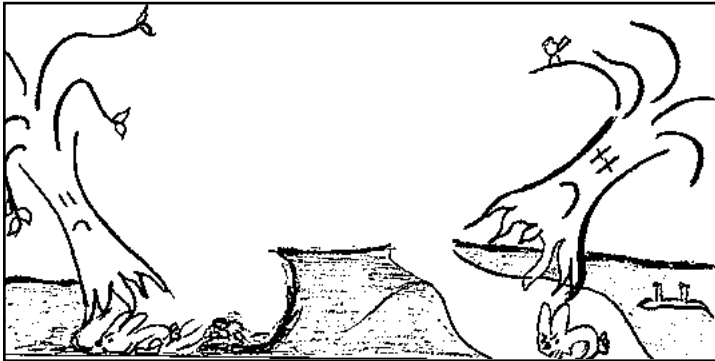
We check the paddocks to make sure there are enough grasses and other **vegetation** for our cows to eat. If there aren't many plants left we move them to another paddock. If we let the cows eat everything, the land will be overrun with rabbits, the trees will die, and there will be bare soils that will 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.





Looking after the Land

Erosion can happen if there are too many rabbits, camels, goats, foxes and cats.



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 Lands plants, animals and landscape 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.



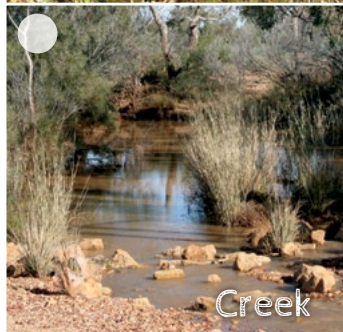
Pest rabbit



Native Bearded Dragon



Pest camel



Creek



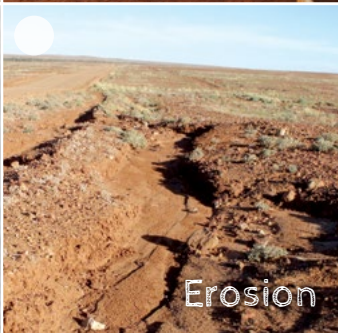
Sheep



Native Wedge-tailed eagle



Native kangaroo



Erosion



Sand dunes



Native Sturt's
Desert Pea



Dingo



A pest rabbit
warren



Native snake



Native chenopod



Native emu



Native Western
Myall



Gibber



Cattle

Spot-O-Cards





Crossword

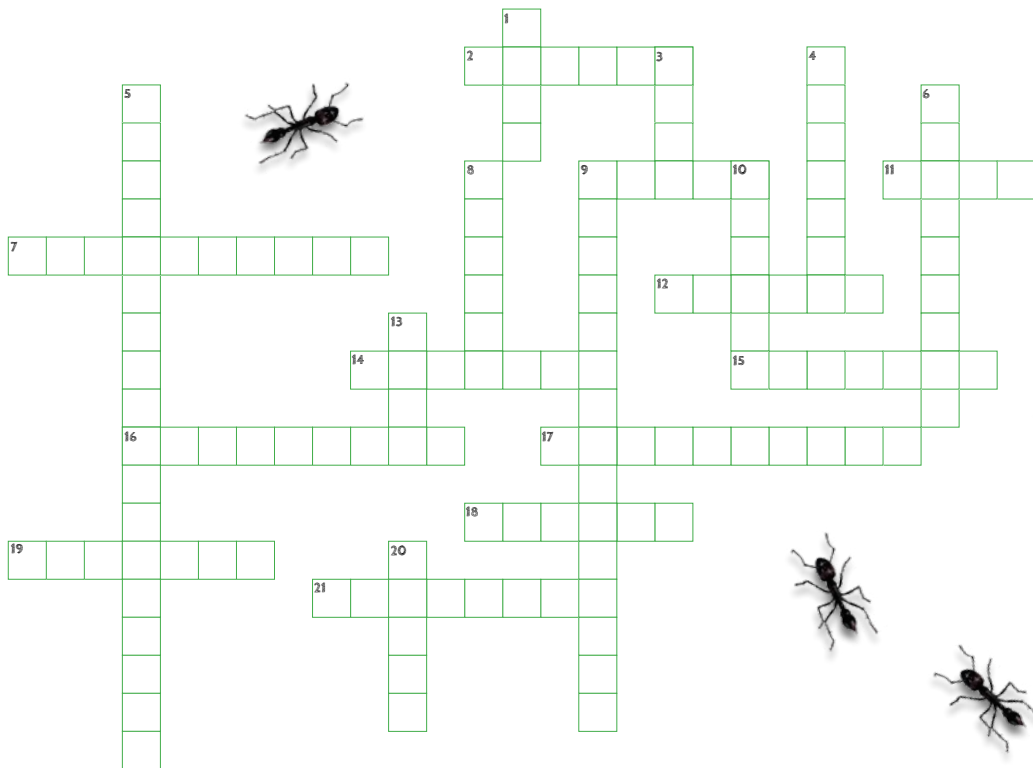
ACROSS

- 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.
- 19** First Nations people have a connection to ____.
- 21** There are lots of rabbits, you can say they are ____.

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** This is caused by too many pest animals.
- 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** Kati-Thandi-____ Eyre, is near William Creek.
- 20** Camels can make waterholes ____.





The mound spring
in the picture
below is called
'Blanche Cup'.



What about water?

Water out here is critical to the health of plants, animals and the people who live here, as well as to pastoral, mining and tourism businesses.

The South Australian Arid Lands has water you can sometimes see in our creeks, rivers and lakes known as **surface** water.

Sometimes this water comes from rain in the area, and sometimes it comes from heavy falls upstream in places like Queensland, Northern Territory and western New South Wales that flow into Kati-Thanda-Lake Eyre.

Underground water is part of the **Great Artesian Basin**, also called the GAB. While you can't see this water, it has been there for up to 250 million years and it is one of the world's largest sources of fresh groundwater.

The water in the mound springs you might see north of Marree comes from the GAB and these **springs** are important places for arid land plants and animals, including some that can't be found anywhere else in the world.

The GAB is also a **vital** water resource that provides water for outback communities in South Australia, Northern Territory, Queensland and New South Wales.



Find the answers to the
quizzes on our website

www.landscape.sa.gov.au/saal/get-involved/education

Further information

Andy the Ant's Arid Adventures is a fun activity book 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.

References

Drawings by Melissa Cox
www.mtdare.com.au

'Robby the Rascally Rabbit' image by Michel Gagné
www.gagneint.com
GAGNÉ International LLC

Regina and Russel the Aboriginal Rangers information advice from the Indigenous Desert Alliance and artwork by Marika Davies.
www.indigenousdesertalliance.com

Graphic design by elevenacross
www.elevenacross.com.au