

# Sensational Australian Animals

AUTHOR

**STEPHANIE OWEN REEDER**

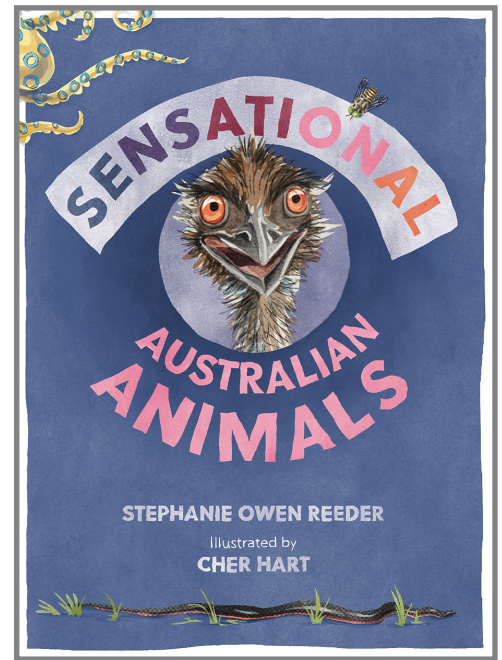
ILLUSTRATOR

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**SCIS:** 5473024

**ISBN:** 9781486316892

**RECOMMENDED FOR:** Mid to Upper Primary



## SYNOPSIS

Explore the fascinating world of native Australian animals through the five basic senses—sight, sound, smell, taste and touch.

Covering more than 145 truly astounding animals—from sharp-eyed whale sharks to sticky-bellied green tree frogs—*Sensational Australian Animals* showcases the strange things these creatures can do with their eyes, ears, noses, mouths and skin! Meet birds that laugh, frogs that quack and fish that sing. Discover mammals that glow in the dark and seahorses disguised as seaweed. Be surprised by turtles that breathe through their bums and squirm at lizards that clean their eyes with their tongues. And then there's the dangerous creatures that bite and sting!

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Stephanie Owen Reeder is the author of over 20 historical novels and picture books for children, including *Swiftly: The Super-fast Parrot*. She has won the NSW Premier's History Award and the CBCA Book of the Year Award for information books.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Cher Hart is a nature illustrator, graphic designer and spatial analyst with a background in biology and a sense of fun. She has created scientific communication material for journals, exhibitions and government. This is her first published children's book.

## THEMES

- The five senses
- Animal behaviour
- Physical animal features

## STUDY NOTES

### BEFORE READING

- Ask students to name the five senses (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch). Then explain the sensory organs responsible for each one (eyes, ears, nose, mouth, skin).
- Discuss why an animal's senses are so important for their survival. Individually or in groups, list a sense that would be handy for a cockatoo, a kangaroo and a snake to have, and explain how each species would use it.

## WHILE READING

### Science

- Read p 7 in the book *Sensational Australian Animals* and ask students to find examples from the rest of the chapter 'The eyes have it!' of animals that use their eyes to do each of the following:
  - find food
  - stay safe
  - explore their environment.
- Birds make all kinds of noises. Sometimes the noises are soft and pleasant, sometimes they are loud and terrifying. Some birds even mimic other animals. Why do you think the range of noises birds can create varies so much? What might cause birds to sing softly, and what might cause them to sing with more alarm?
- Read the chapter 'Follow your nose!' on pp 31–39 and discuss how animals use smell to help them find food or a mate, or to ward off predators. Some of their behaviours are probably not that surprising, but what's peculiar about the southern hairy-nosed wombat? (Its poo is cube-shaped)
- Camouflage is used by many animals. Why do you think that's important for them?
  - In small groups, choose one animal that's a master of disguise from the following list:
    - tawny frogmouth
    - numbat
    - wrap-around spider
    - leafy sea dragon
    - reef stonefish
    - birddropping spider.

Write a summary of how that animal disguises itself and why. Share your findings with the class.

- Assign each student an animal to research from the list at: <<https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/fact-files/>>. Instruct them to use the relevant fact file for their species, as well as additional resources online or in the library, to write a report on their animal, including information on one of the five senses that the animal uses.
- Compare the behaviours of different species within the same animal group. Select an animal group from the book and create a table of information on each species discussed, noting which of the five senses it uses. Use the following headings for the table:
  - Species name
  - Sense
  - Behaviour.

### English

- There is a detailed Glossary at the back of the book, but there may be other words in the book that students don't understand that aren't defined in the Glossary. Ask students to select two words from the book that aren't already in the Glossary and discuss their meaning as a class. Can you make sense of them based on the others words around them? Here are some potential words, but there could be others:
  - boisterous
  - menacing
  - turbulent
  - wailing.
- An index helps readers to navigate the content in a book by listing topics discussed and the page numbers they are found on. On small cards, write the name of each animal group that's listed in the *Sensational Australian Animals* index (or as many as there are students in the class). Place them in a container, then have students pick one card each. Instruct the students to write down, on the other side of the card, which of the five senses their chosen animal favours, and how or why. Tell them to use the index to help them find the information in the book. When finished, collect all the cards and place them in the container again. Pick one out and say the name of the animal, then ask the class to suggest what sense that animal might use. The student who had that card can then confirm if the class is right. Then select another card, and so on.

**Sustainability**

- Some animals are fussy when it comes to what they eat. Take, for example, the koala. Its diet consists of eucalyptus leaves, but only from specific trees. What might happen to the koala population if they can no longer find their usual food source? (Prompt students to consider habitat destruction due to development, bushfires, etc.)

**The Arts**

- Using your imagination, and drawing on information in the book *Sensational Australian Animals*, draw a make-believe animal that has superpower senses! Incorporate at least two of the five senses in your new animal. Name your new creation and write a short summary of what makes it special, including how it uses its senses. Paint or colour in your drawing, then present it to the class.