

Cycles of life



Some animals die of old age, some die of disease, some are killed and eaten by other animals. But the world does not run out of animals because more are being born or hatched all the time.

You will be visiting the museum to see some baby animals and their parents. Here are some of their stories.



Where to have babies

Human babies can be born anywhere in the world.

But many other animals only have babies in special places.



Short-finned Eels travel a long way to have their babies. They usually live in rivers and creeks, but they swim down stream and then hundreds of kilometres out to sea to have their babies.

Sharp-tailed Sandpipers travel even further.

They fly thousands of kilometres from Australia to Siberia for the Siberian summer (our winter). There they raise their young before flying back to Australia for our summer.



Banded Stilts are so fussy they only breed after rain fills empty lakes in deserts.

This does not happen very often, so Banded Stilt chicks are not seen very often.



Finding a mate

Almost all baby animals have a father and a mother.

Some fathers go to a lot of trouble to find a mother to start a family.



A male **Spotted Bowerbird** makes a tunnel of grass called a bower. He decorates it using stones, bones or other white things. Female bower birds pick males with the best bowers and then start their families.



Giant Australian Cuttlefish have a different way to attract a mate. The males change colour to make themselves bright and colourful to attract females and scare off other males.

Male **Blue Throat Wrasse** know how to find a girlfriend because they were once females. The baby fish all grow up as females. After they lay their eggs they grow more and turn into males. They can be fathers to some babies and mothers to others. How strange!



Looking after eggs.

Many baby animals hatch out of eggs, and parents need to make sure their eggs are safe.

Masked Lapwings lay their eggs on the ground. The eggs have dots and spots so they are very hard to see. If an enemy comes close to their eggs the parent birds attack it.



Shield Shrimp do not look after their eggs at all. The eggs are so tough that they do not need to be looked after. These shrimp live in pools and puddles in the desert.

When the pools dry up the tough eggs wait for the next rain before hatching. The tiny eggs might be blown to a new part of the desert before they get wet and hatch.

Woma Pythons look after their eggs much better. They dig a burrow and lay their eggs in it.



Mallee Fowl are hardworking parents.



They bury their eggs in a huge pile of leaves and cover the leaves with sand. The rotting leaves give off heat. This keeps the eggs warm. The parents scrape sand off or add it to the mound if the eggs get too hot or cold.

Homes for babies

Some animals look after their babies. Some animals don't.

A female **Whistling Spider** makes a silk sack to hold her eggs. She usually stays in her burrow with it, but if she leaves home to hunt she carries the egg sack in her mouth.



A **Platypus** digs two kinds of burrows. Most burrows are short, camping burrows. A platypus has many of these safe burrows to sleep in. A mother Platypus uses a longer, larger burrow with carpets of leaves when she lays her eggs and looks after her babies.

Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters and **Scarlet Robins** both build nests in trees. Most birds build nests, but there are many different kinds of nests. Some are built on the ground. Many are built in trees.



Cormorants also nest in trees. Sometimes they may build nests in mangrove trees which grow along the shore in sea water. If the baby cormorants get a fright they sometimes jump into the sea. Then they have to climb back up the tree to get into their nests, because they cannot fly yet.

Changes

*Some animals change a little as they grow bigger.
Others change a lot!*



Many people love **butterflies**, but hate to see caterpillars eating their plants. Unfortunately caterpillars are baby butterflies. They turn into butterflies. So if you kill the caterpillars you kill off the butterflies. Sometimes it is a good idea to plant a few bushes for the caterpillars to eat. We can put up with looking at some chewed leaves.

The caterpillars of the Caper White Butterfly only eat caper plants. Sometimes there are so many caterpillars on a bush that they eat every leaf on it before turning into butterflies.

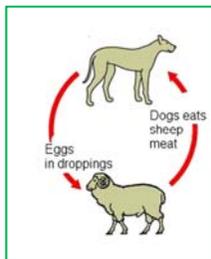


Caper bush



Few people see baby **ants**. They look like small grubs and are cared for underground by adult ants until they grow up and change into the ants we see scurrying about.

Not all caterpillars eat leaves. The caterpillar of the **Bardi Moth** eats through the roots of plants for many years before it turns into a moth.



Tapeworms live inside dogs' guts. They lay eggs that come out in the dog's poo. If a sheep eats grass near the poo it might eat the eggs. Then baby tapeworms hatch out in the sheep and live in bags in the sheep's muscles. If a dog kills the sheep and eats it the baby tapeworms grow into big worms in the guts of the dog.

Baby names

We sometimes have special names for baby animals.

A baby **kangaroo** is called a Joey. Small joeys live in their mother's pouch and drink baby milk from one of the nipples in the pouch. When it grows a bit bigger a Joey sometimes leaves mum's pouch and nibbles grass, but it still gets back into the pouch for a milk drink. Mother makes different milk for the older joeys.



Baby birds are usually called chicks, but some baby birds have special names. A **duck** chick is called a duckling and a **goose** chick is called a gosling. These baby birds grow warm fluffy feathers, but do not grow strong flight feathers until they are older.



An **Echidna** lays an egg and places it in her pouch. She carries the egg for almost three weeks before the tiny baby Echidna hatches.

The baby is called a Puggle. Mum lets the puggle live in her pouch until it starts growing its prickles.

Mum and dad

Some animals are looked after by both of their parents. Some are only looked after by one parent. Other animals are not looked after by their parents at all.

Red Kangaroos live in groups called mobs. A mob of kangaroos can have many males and females feeding and moving together. Females carry Joeys in their pouch if they are too small to follow the mob.



Gidgee Skinks live in family group. The group might be just mum, dad and the kids, but sometimes more adults join the family. Young skinks may stay at home for several years after they grow up.

Female **Emus** lay eggs, but after that they take no more interest in their young. The father sits on the eggs without eating or drinking until they hatch. He then guards the chicks as they grow up.



A **Mulga Snake** lays her eggs in an old burrow or under a log or rock. Then she leaves. The young snakes must care for themselves after they hatch.

Life as a baby

Most baby animals live very different lives to their parents.

Baby **Southern Brown Bandicoots** have no hair when they are born. They look more like jelly beans with tiny legs than like bandicoots. They grow up in mum's pouch. Even when they get too big for the pouch their mother still lets them drink milk from her nipples in her pouch. They start feeding for themselves after about two months.



Baby **Sea Lions** look a lot like their parents, but, unlike their parents they do not swim much. They have warm fur, which they need because their mother leaves them alone for days at a time while she swims to find food.

Some animals have babies that don't look anything like their parents. Baby **butterflies** are caterpillars, which look nothing like a butterfly.

Baby flies are maggots, which look nothing like a fly.

Baby animals that are so different are called larvae.

Many animals that live in the sea start life as larvae.

*This is a picture of a **starfish larva** seen through a microscope.*

