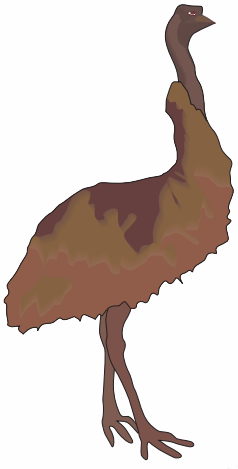
# READING MAGAZINE

YEAR 5

2008

# Why elephants and emus cannot fly

**An Indian folktale** tells of a time when elephants could fly. One day a flock of elephants landed in a tree. A branch fell on a man who was sitting under the tree thinking. He was cross. He used his powers of thought to take away the elephants' wings.



**An Australian story** tells about Emu, who once had beautiful, big, rainbow-coloured wings and could fly. Emu was always boasting, so Kookaburra set up a competition to trick Emu. Emu tried to fly to the sun to prove that his wings were the best. The sun burnt Emu's wings and he fell back to Earth. Ever since then, emus have had small brown wings and cannot fly.

# Dale Richards

Dale Richards is one of Australia's top young surfers. Some people say he is like a snake on the waves. One day he hopes to be world champion so he can surf in different countries around the world.

Dale was born in Townsville in Queensland in 1988. When he was eleven years old he hurt his leg playing football. This is why he decided to start surfing. He picked up surfing right away — other surfers said that he was a natural.

Throughout his time at school, Dale tried to surf every day. This was difficult because of homework, but he always got plenty of help and encouragement from his family and teachers.

Now that he has left school he can focus completely on surfing. He gets up at 4 am and surfs for eight hours each day.

# Amphibians

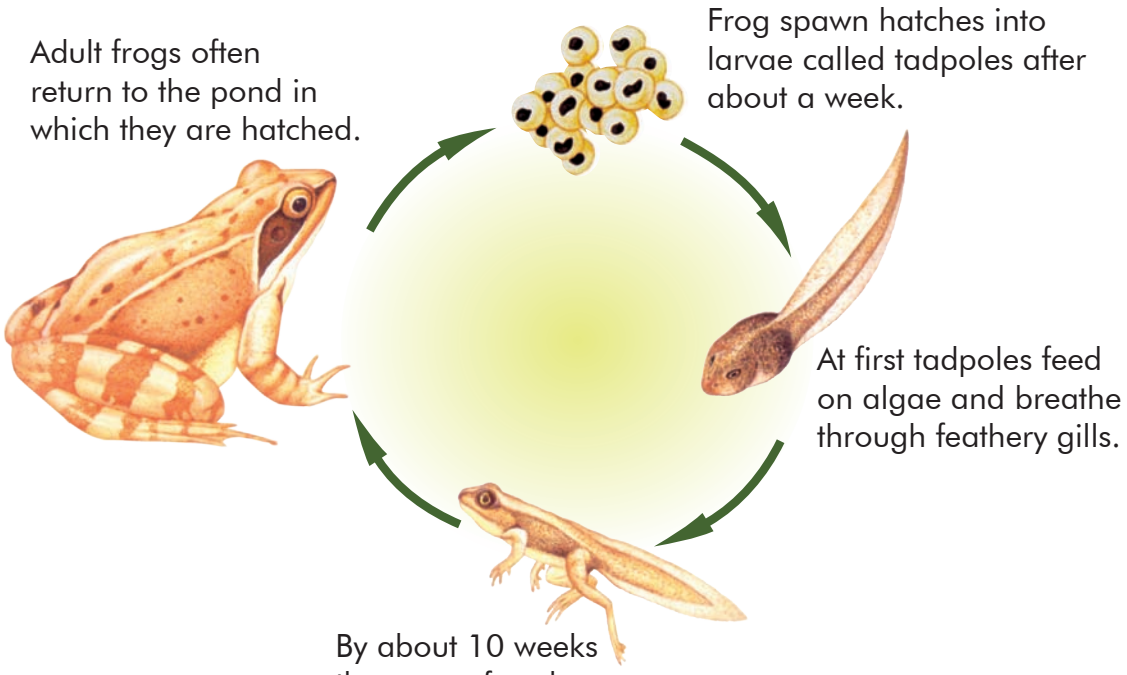
There are 4400 living species of amphibians. Frogs, toads, newts and salamanders are all amphibians. Many live mainly on land, but most spend at least some of their lives in water.

The largest amphibian, the Chinese giant salamander, is 1.8 m long.

Frogs and salamanders are able to breathe through their damp skins to a certain extent, both in the water and on the land, but toads rely largely on their lungs and cannot remain underwater for long. Toads and frogs are similar in many ways, although toads usually have rougher, drier skins and may waddle rather than hop as frogs do.

Some toads produce spawn in strings like necklaces, rather than the mass of eggs laid by frogs.

Most amphibians lay their eggs in water. Frogs' eggs are called spawn. The eggs are protected from predators by a thick layer of jelly. A tadpole develops inside each egg. When it hatches, it is able to swim using its long tail, and it breathes through gills. As a tadpole grows, first hind legs then forelegs begin to form. Lungs develop, and the young frog is able to begin to breathe with its head above water. Gradually, the tail shortens until the young frog resembles its adult parents.



# LACY

*This story is narrated (told) by a woman who has a small farm in the bush.*

I met her in the drought, when the air was baked thin above the shed and the casuarinas shivered in the heat.

It was too hot even to sleep by the creek. I came back to the shed and lay on the bed and dreamt of ice-cream and glaciers.

I don't know what woke me. I went to the window.

Something moved in the vegie garden. It was as long as I am, and even wider, a mottled yellow grey. It lifted its head and stared at me.

'There's a dinosaur in the potatoes,' I thought.

And then: 'No, I'm hallucinating — there can't be a dinosaur in the potatoes.'

'Maybe I'm not hallucinating,' I decided. 'Maybe someone is making a dinosaur movie in my potato patch and a model dinosaur has escaped …' when I realised …

'It's a giant goanna and she's heading for the chookhouse.'

I slammed out the door. The goanna saw me. She lurched in the other direction, up the hill towards the chooks. I ran after her.

'Stop! Hey stop! Get out of it!'

The goanna turned her head, gave me a disgusted glance and lurched faster. Not much faster — when you're as big as Lacy goanna you don't go very fast. Goannas do walk like dinosaurs — or rather movie makers have modelled the way they make dinosaurs walk on komodo dragons, close relatives of goannas.

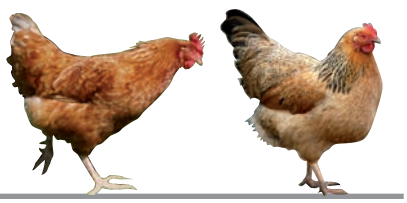
This goanna was the largest I'd ever seen. Goannas keep growing all the time, as long as they live. Lacy goanna was probably a couple of hundred years old, older than white settlement in this country.

I ran faster. The goanna kept lurching up towards the chookhouse. It was obvious I was gaining on her. She swerved to one side and began to clamber up a wattle tree instead.

It was a very small wattle tree and she was a very large goanna. The further up she climbed the more the tree bent down, till finally I was eye-to-eye with a confused goanna.

Lacy blinked a couple of times as though to say, 'No, you can't see me really. I've climbed a tree. I'm way up here! You really can't see me at all.'

I spent the morning guarding the chookhouse. Lacy goanna spent the morning up the tree, trying to pretend it wasn't swaying with her weight, probably about to break.



# Pet dogs — what do you think?

May 21

Dear Editor,

Dogs are working animals, not pets. They belong out on the farm, rounding up sheep and cattle. In the city they are just a smelly, noisy nuisance. They leave their mess all over the streets, and some of them never stop barking.

Where are their owners? Why are these supposedly wonderful friends left alone to pine and whine and dig up the garden, or to bark at anyone who dares to walk past 'their' house?

If we must have dogs in the city, they need to be trained properly. Aside from the street-poopers and the barkers, there are the chasers and the bounders. These dreadful creatures rush up and almost knock you flat before you have time to decide if they are greeting you or attacking you.

Farm dogs earn their keep, but these city slickers consume far more than their fair share of the world's resources. And of course, it's not just scraps. It's gourmet cuisine, individually tinned or freeze-dried, which the pampered darlings can eat at their leisure from personalised doggy bowls, before having a home-visit haircut and shampoo or retiring to their fur-lined baskets.

Sarah Williston

May 28

Dear Editor,

Yes, Sarah Williston (May 21), we do give dogs a good life, but they pay us back generously, with affection and intelligence and good humour.

Dogs are wonderful companions, loyal and trustworthy. They will play safely with the kids, or keep a house-bound person company all day long. Dogs are increasingly being used in nursing homes and hospitals as a welcoming and calming presence, and in some places, teachers even have a pet dog in the classroom.

It is true that training a dog takes considerable time and effort, but it is time well-spent. Taking responsibility for a canine pet builds character, as well as offering a lot of pleasure.

Sincerely,
John Bonavista

# Attack and Defence

Many dinosaurs used their horns, spikes or armour to defend themselves. But even those without armour had their own defence weapons.

- *Apatosaurus* could rear up on its hind legs and crush an attacker with its front feet, or use its tail to injure a predator.
- Many other sauropods travelled in herds, relying on safety in numbers so that only weak or sick animals would be attacked.
- The bird-mimic dinosaurs such as *Gallimimus* used their speed to escape.
- *Pachycephalosaurus* could use its thick skull to defend itself against both predators and other members of its own species.
- Meat eaters had speed, agility and sharp teeth for effective attack and defence.
- Large predators such as *Tyrannosaurus* hunted alone, and relied on a surprise rush.

**Built like a tank**
*Europlocephalus* was protected by bands of armour, bony studs on the shoulders and a heavy, bony skull. It could injure a predator by lashing out with a bony club at the end of its tail.

**Multi-purpose tail**
*Diplodocus*' tail was longer than a tennis court. It used the tail for support when it reared up to crush a predator with its front legs. It also swung its tail like a whip to blind or stun an attacker.

**Stabbing tail**
To defend itself against a predator, *Tuojiangosaurus* used its muscular tail, which was armed at the tip with two pairs of sharp spikes.

**A spiky shield**
*Triceratops*' neck was a massive frill of solid bone with horns one metre long that protected its neck and chest from an attack by another *Triceratops* or a predator.




## Tim

On Monday, Tim dressed for school.

First he put on his shorts.

Then he put on his shirt.

Next he put on his socks.

Last he put on his shoes.


## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**Dale Richards**
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**Amphibians**
Adapted text and illustrations from *Tell Me How? 2001 Edition*, published by Chancellor Press, an imprint of Bounty Books, a division of Octopus Publishing Group Ltd.

**Lacy**
French, Jackie, *Dancing with Ben Hall*, HarperCollins Australia, 1997.
Images: (chickens) Gravicapa / stock.xchng; (goanna) photographer Michael A. Zimmer

**Attack and defence**
Adapted text and illustrations from page 44 of *Discoveries: Dinosaurs*, Weldon Owen, 1995. Consulting Editor Dr Angela Milner, Illustrations by Christer Eriksson and Frank Knight. © 1995 Weldon Owen Pty Ltd.

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