



Junior Ranger

Review

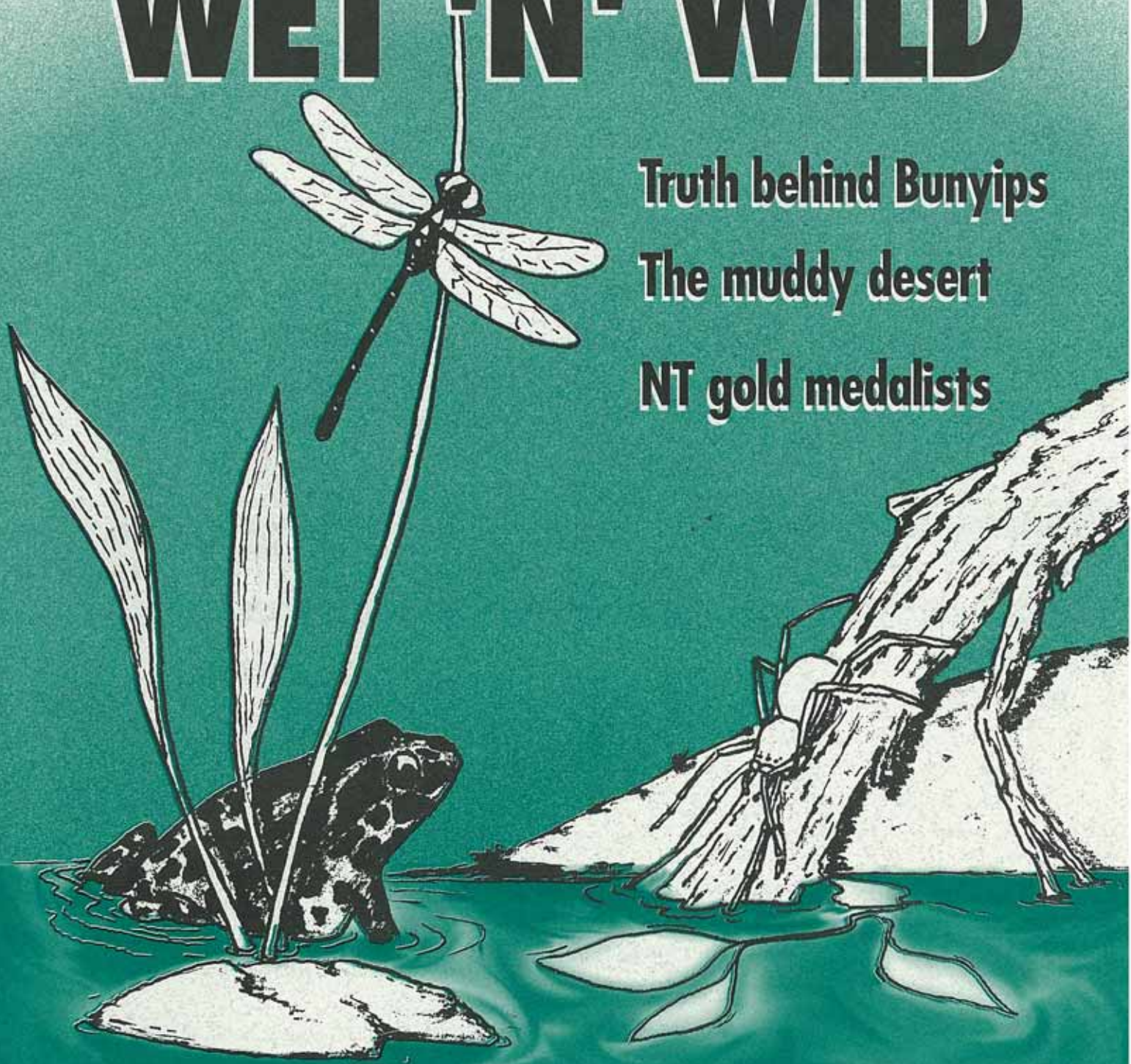
April - May 1998

WET 'N' WILD

Truth behind Bunyips

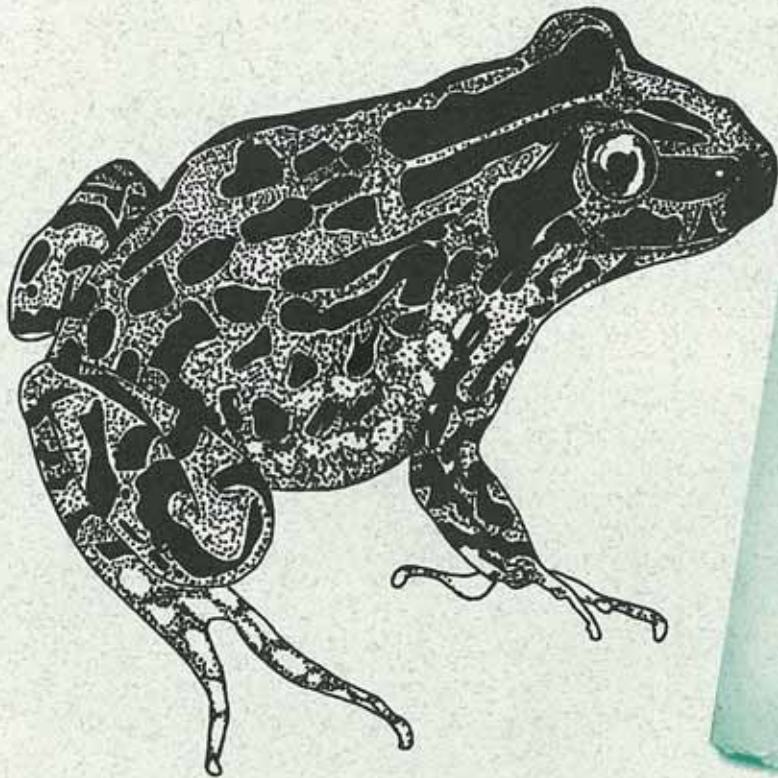
The muddy desert

NT gold medalists



GET SET TO GET WET!

What a Stunning Lady!



Our beautiful covergirl this month is *Limnodynastes convexiusculus*, the Marbled Frog.

- She's a resident of one of the Territory's most exclusive addresses: the floodplains east of Darwin.
- In the dry season she likes to holiday in one of the region's many beautiful paperbark swamps, lazing by the pool.
- The stunning coat she's wearing is a very stylish dark green with tasteful dark splotches.
- This beautiful lady is one of a number of Territorians featured in this edition of the Junior Ranger Review. We hope you enjoy meeting them and their wet and wild world.

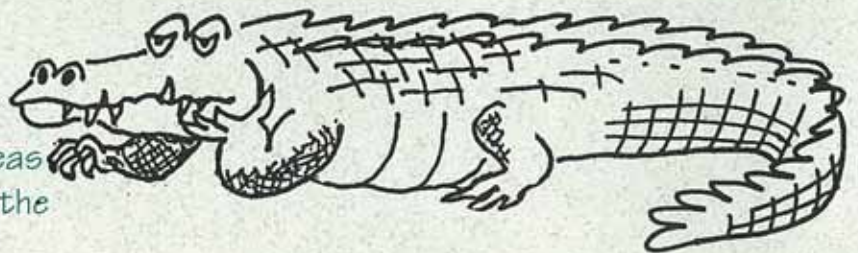
Wet and Wonderful Facts ...

Did you know

Australia is the driest continent on Earth. However 40 of our wetland areas have been recognized as being among the world's most special places.

Australia has more frogs than the whole of Europe and North America. It's a pity we don't know a lot about them.

Nearly 80% of Australia's commercial fish depend on coastal mangroves at some stage in their life.



There are no platypus in the Territory but we have the only other Australian fresh-water mammal: the True Water-rat *Hydromys chrysogaster*.

The beautiful Purple-crowned Fairy-wren is now rare because of damage to its Pandanus habitat by pigs and buffalo.

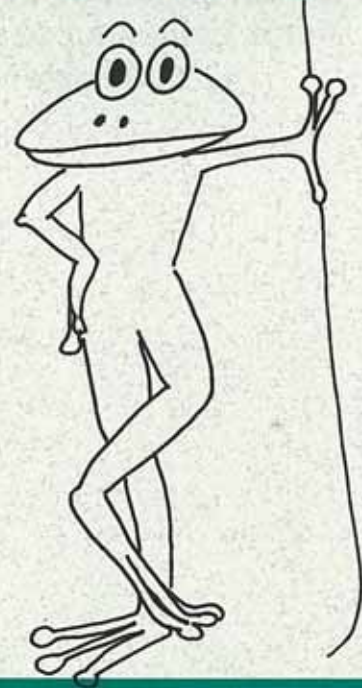


Frogwatch

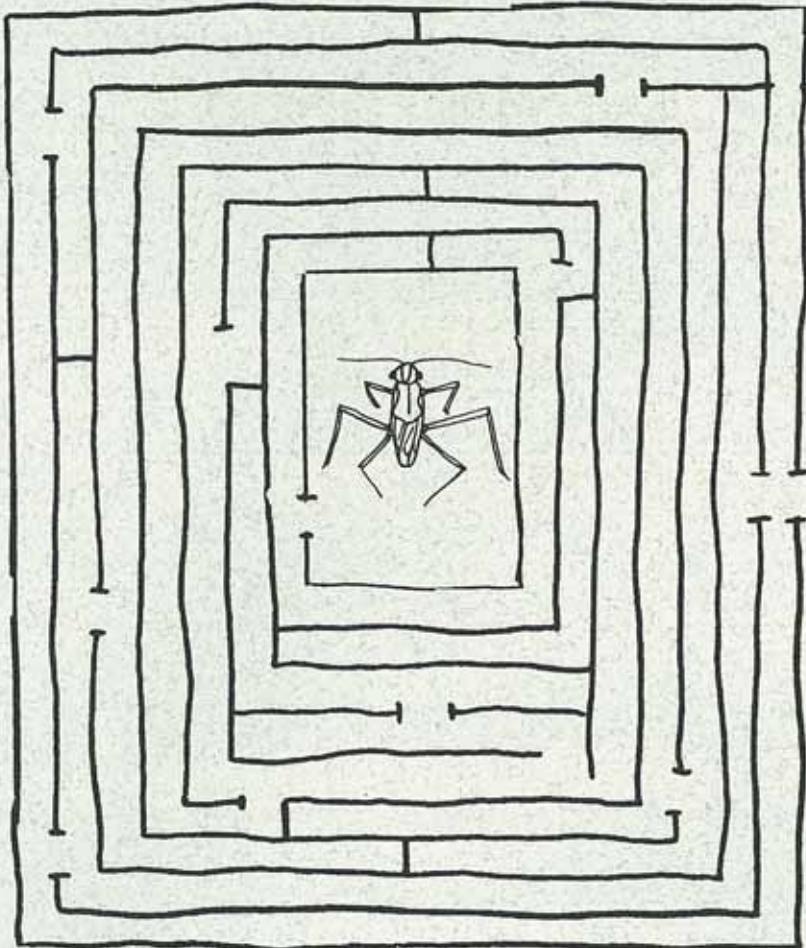
Frogs are disappearing from our planet at an alarming rate. Australia has already lost several species from the east coast. Scientists believe water pollution has a lot to do with it.

Frogs spend a lot of time in water and so are very sensitive to changes in water quality. They are a good indication of the health of our aquatic environment.

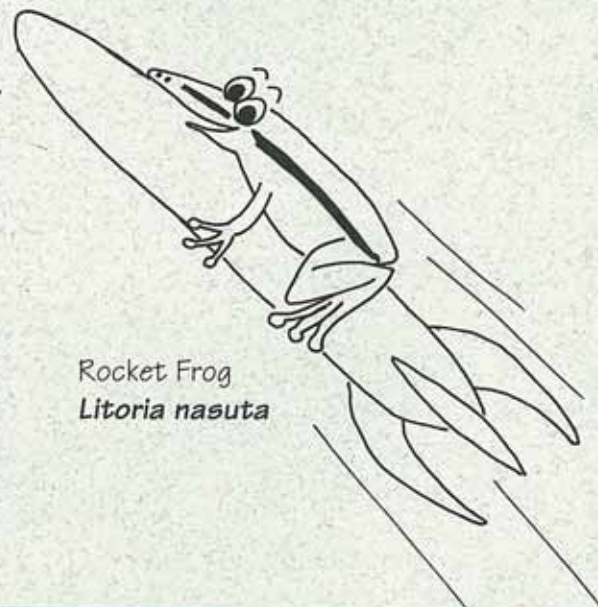
Frogwatch is a program to encourage community involvement in monitoring frog populations. If you would like to get involved, contact the Junior Ranger coordinators in Darwin, Katherine or Alice Springs.



THE MICHAEL DOOHAN OF THE WETLANDS



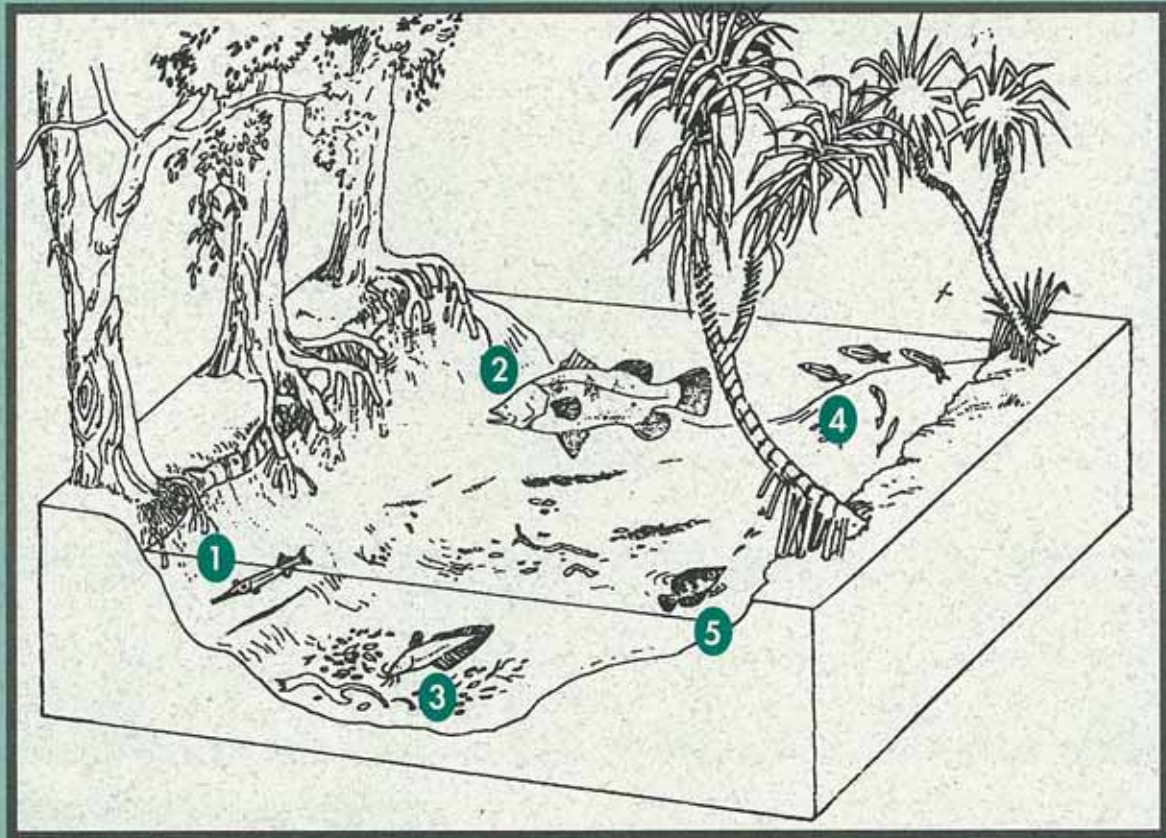
If there was a grand prix race for frogs, the Territory's Rocket Frog would have a good chance of winning. It is fast! Imagine you're a Rocket Frog. How fast can you get to the insect in the middle.



Rocket Frog
Litoria nasuta

Wet and Wild

Michael Klim and Susie O'Neil certainly made a big splash at the World Swimming Championships. Use this number code to reveal the names of some great Territory swimmers.



Code

1=A	5=E	9=I	13=M	17=Q	21=U	25=Y
2=B	6=F	10=J	14=N	18=R	22=V	
3=C	7=G	11=K	15=O	19=S	23=W	
4=D	8=H	12=L	16=P	20=T	24=X	

① Imagine having a mouth a quarter the length of your body!

12	15	14	7	20	15	13

② I'm queen of the pool but was born a prince.

2	1	18	18	1	13	21	14	4	9

③ I find garbage quite tasty.

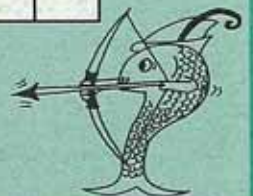
3	1	20	6	9	19	8

④ Short ... but what good lookers we are!

18	1	9	14	2	15	23	6	9	19	8

⑤ A better shot than Robin Hood.

1	18	3	8	5	18	6	9	19	8



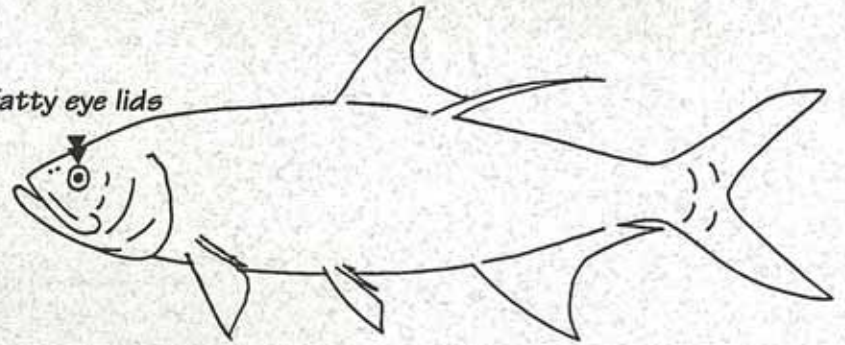
Spotlighting at Night

Megalops cyprinoides is a large fish, common in Top End billabongs.

At night you might hear it jumping and snapping at insects. You can spot its big red eyes in the water with a torch.

Life can be tough in the Australian outback but these little battlers can handle it.

Fatty eye lids



Use the number code to reveal its name.

15	24	5	25	5	8	5	18	18	9	14	7

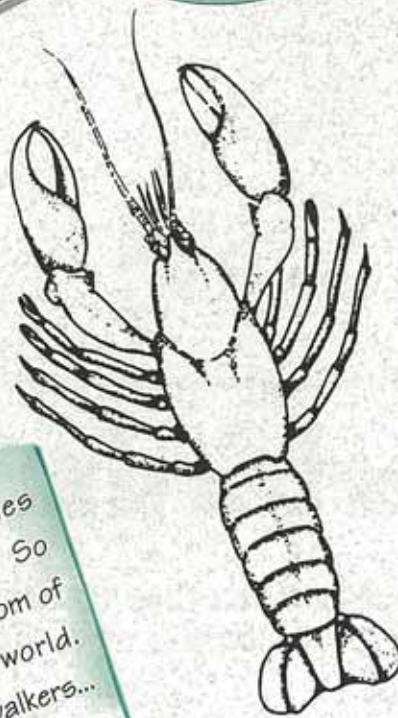
THE AMAZING YABBY...

If their waterhole dries up, they will dig into the mud and sleep until conditions improve.

Losing a claw is not a problem. They can grow another one ... or a new leg ... or a new antenna ... but not a new eye!

Unlike prawns, yabbies can't swim upwards. So they live on the bottom of their under waterworld. But they're great walkers...

... Yabbies go walkabout if a spot is not to their liking. Some yabbies have been known to travel as far as 2 kilometres over land.



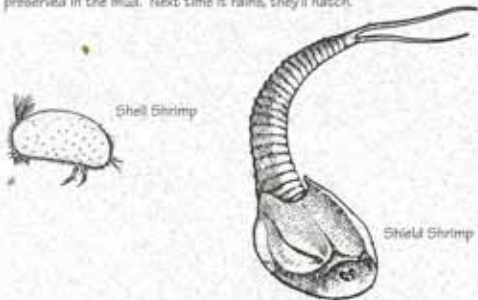
DESERT CLAYPANS

Ewaninga is half an hour's drive south of Alice Springs. There you'll find ancient Aboriginal carvings on a crumbling hill surrounded by desert sand dunes. Nearby is a claypan. For most of the year it's dry and sunburnt. The dry clay cracks under your feet. But it's a different place after rain.



When rain falls the claypan fills with water. Tiny real Shell Shrimp and larger Shield Shrimp magically appear in the murky water.

They'll die when the claypan dries up but their eggs are preserved in the mud. Next time it rains, they'll hatch.



Shell Shrimp

Shield Shrimp



Sharp-eyed visitors can read the sands to know where a dingo has prowled, where a beetle has scurried, or where the scorpion lurks.

An amazing little creature appears in the claypan after rain. The Water-holding Frog soaks up water until it's as round as Humpty Dumpty.

Unlike the Shrimps, it won't die when the claypan dries up. It will dig down in the mud bur first. There it will sleep through the dry desert days until the fall of rain drops wakes it from its slumber.



Cyclorana maini

Waterbirds

Waterbirds fly to the claypans when they fill with water. Use this letter code to reveal the names of two of them.

CODE: A=Z B=Y C=X D=E etc.

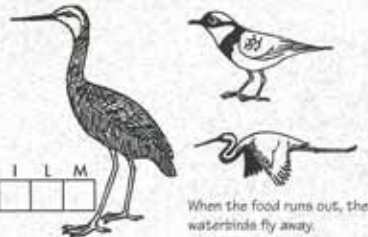
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
Z Y X W V U T S R Q P O N M L K J I H G F E D C B A

Y O Z X P U I L M G V W
The

W L G G V I V O
 feeds on aquatic insects around the edges of the claypan. It's a small bird.

D S R G V U Z X V W
The loves a feed of shrimps or frog.

S V I L M



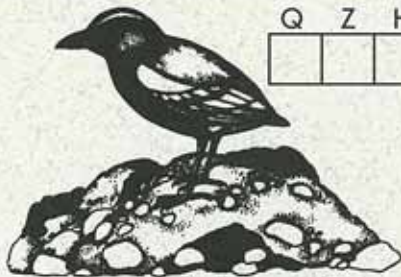
When the food runs out, the waterbirds fly away.

Aquatic Habitats of the Top End

Think of places that are wet or swampy and you'll get the feeling of an aquatic habitat. Decode the names of these places by replacing each letter with the one that comes after it in the alphabet.

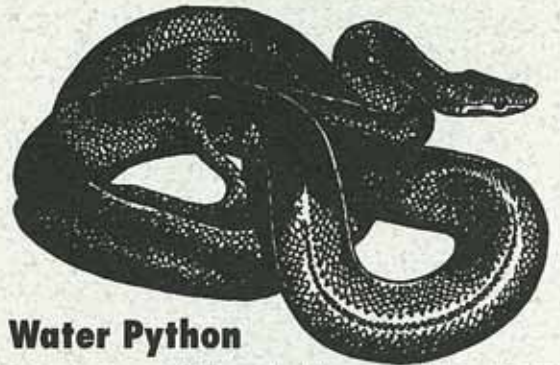
Small pockets of dense vegetation are dotted across the coastal plains. Here a dense canopy of leaves shades the forest floor like an umbrella.

The Rainbow Pitta lives in this humid haven.



Rainbow Pitta

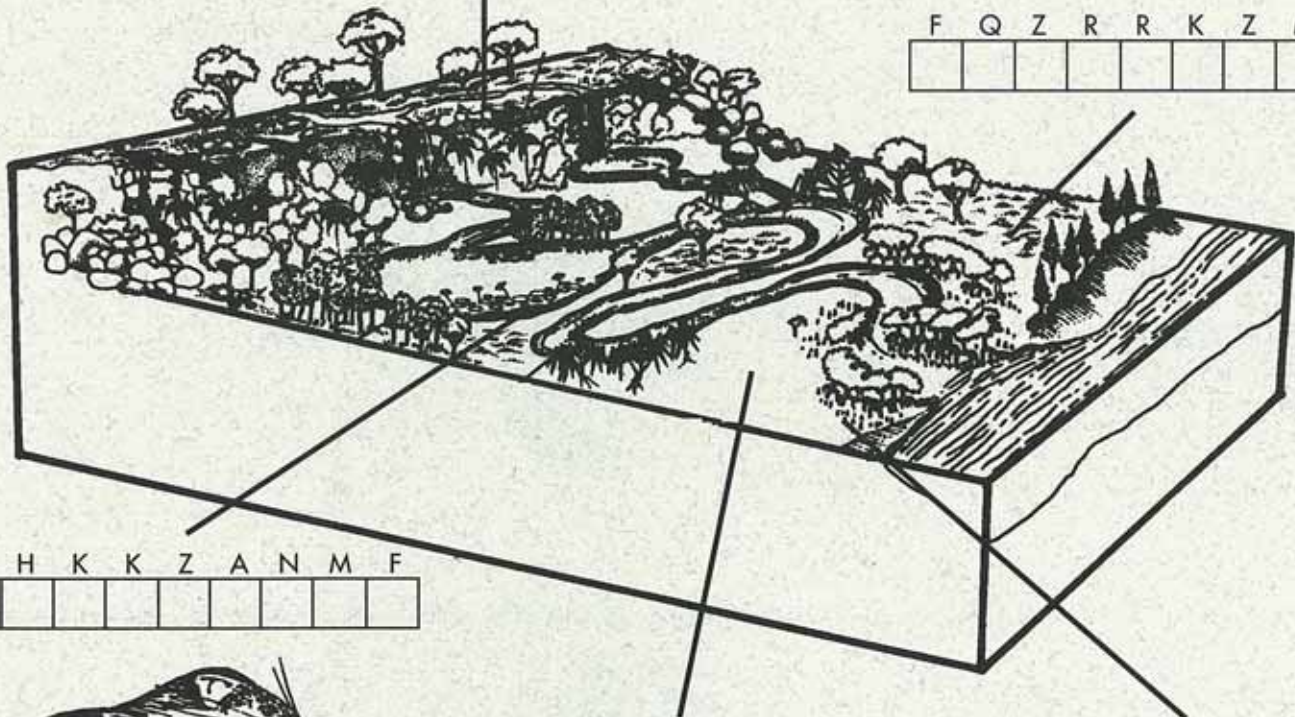
Q Z H M E N Q D R S



Water Python

Forget about fish and chips on Friday night. The Water Python dreams of the tasty, Dusky Rats that live here.

F Q Z R R K Z M C



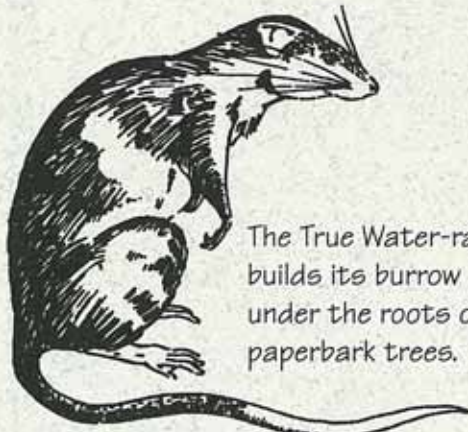
A H K K Z A N M F

L T C E K Z S R

and

L Z M F Q N U D R

From September to April, these places are home to migratory birds that fly from Siberia.



True Water-rat

The True Water-rat builds its burrow under the roots of paperbark trees.



Great Knot

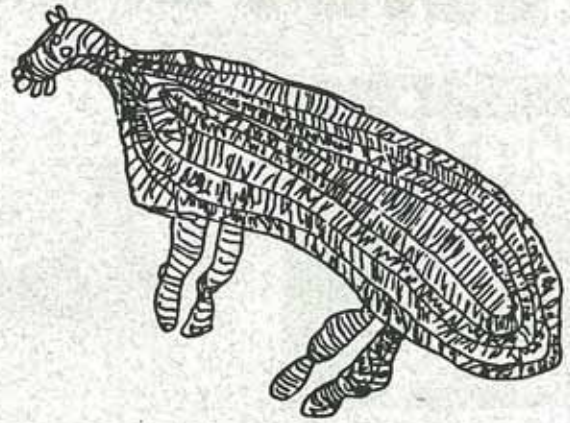
The Legendary Bunyip

If you camp by a billabong in the south east of Australia you may get a fright ... and hear strange noises coming from the water at night.

Aboriginal people in Victoria told white settlers that this was the call of the bunyip - a water dwelling monster that only comes out when the moon is full.

People would say: "Don't go out tonight or the bunyips will get you."

An Aboriginal man from the Murray River drew this picture of a bunyip in 1848.



Sightings of bunyips

In 1821 the explorer Hamilton Hume saw an animal like a hippopotamus in Lake Bathurst NSW (near Goulburn).

In 1847 a frightful creature was seen in the Hunter River near Newcastle NSW. It looked like a human but had feet turned backwards.

In 1872 a party of settlers at Wagga Wagga NSW saw a creature the size of a Retriever dog with long hair.

A man called Hall also saw the strange animal from Lake Bathurst. He said it had the head of a bulldog but the body of a porpoise.

**SEE NEXT PAGE.....
SENSATIONAL REVELATIONS!**

BELIEVE IT OR NOT.....

Bunyips or Seals?



The bunyips people saw were almost certainly seals!

Seals were much more common last century than they are today.

Many were killed for their fur.

Seals often made their way up swollen rivers and were trapped in billabongs when the flood waters went down.

In 1890 a seal was spotted in the Murray River near Barmera SA, 250 km from the sea.

A seal was caught in a stream near Canargo NSW, 1200 km from the sea. Its skin hung over the fireplace of the local pub for many years.

What about the noises?

The strange, booming sounds, people thought were bunyips, were probably the calls of a nocturnal bird: the Australian Bittern. It lives in the reeds around billabongs of the south east. It's got a call like a foghorn.

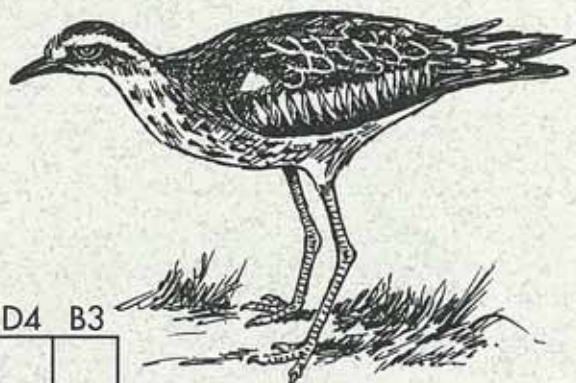


What's my name?

The Australian Bittern is not found in the Northern Territory. But we have another bird that wails at night.

	1	2	3	4	5
A	A	B	C	D	E
B	F	G	H	I	J
C	K	L	M	N	O
D	P	Q	R	S	T
E	U	V	W	X	Y

Crack the code to work out the bird's name.



A2 E1 D4 B3

D5 B3 B4 A3 C1 C1 C4 A5 A5
 -

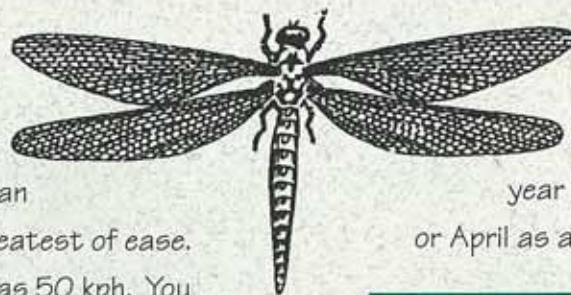
Killers from the Swamps

The appearance of big numbers of dragonflies in the Top End in April is a sign that the dry season is near.

Dragonflies are amazing insects. They are as skilful as the best airforce pilots and can zip, twist and turn with the greatest of ease. Some of them can fly as fast as 50 kph. You can hear the hum of power as they fly by.

Their speed enables them to snatch a meal out of the air. They chomp their way through large numbers of mosquitoes, butterflies, moths and marchflies. Sometimes they enjoy an inflight meal. Other times they stop on a branch to eat their lunch.

Dragonflies mate in the air but the females



lay their eggs on the surface of water. The eggs sink to the muddy bottom and hatch.

The nymphs may prowl the bottom of waterholes for a full year before emerging in the next March or April as adult dragonflies.



The dragonfly nymph is a real ugly duckling compared to its beautiful parents.

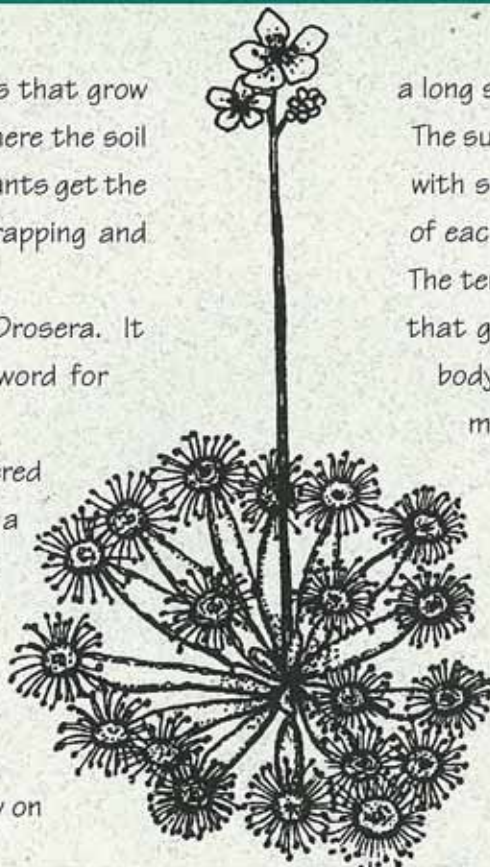
Next time you're wandering near a Top End swamp, keep your eyes open for one of our most extraordinary wildflowers. It's Drosera, the insect-eating Sundew.

Sundews are small plants that grow in moist, sandy places where the soil is poor in nitrogen. The plants get the nitrogen they need by trapping and digesting insects.

Their botanical name is Drosera. It comes from the Greek word for dew.

The leaves seem to be covered with dew. It's actually a sticky juice that stretches like honey. It traps any insects unlucky enough to be lured by the sweet smell.

Pink or white flowers grow on



a long stalk above the leaves.

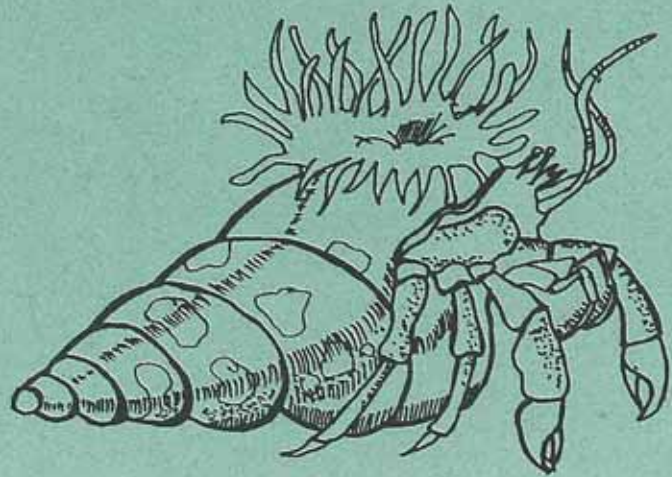
The surface of the leaves are covered with sensitive tentacles. At the tip of each one is a drop of sticky juice. The tentacles curl around any insect that gets stuck. In a few hours its body will be reduced to a shapeless mess when digestion is completed.

After several days, when digesting is complete, the tentacles uncurl and stand upright again. Sticky juice forms at the end again and the Sundew is ready for another feed.

Coastal Wet and Wild

How good a word sleuth are you?

These hidden words go in all directions and some are written backwards. Circle the letters (or colour their boxes) as you find them.



ALGAE
CLAM
CORAL
EGGS
GREAT KNOT
GULL
HEART URCHIN
HERMIT CRAB
LIZARD
MANGROVE
MOON SNAIL
OYSTER
POLYP
PRAWN
SANDFLY
SANDPIPER
SEA EAGLE
SEAL
SHAG
TURTLE

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

You should have 14 letters left over. String them together to spell the name for a mangrove tree's breathing roots.

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The Junior Ranger Review is produced 4 times a year by the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory. This edition was written by Stuart Traynor. Design and layout are by Big Picture Graphic Art. The cover is by Robbie Henderson. Illustrations in this edition are by Bob Whiteford, Joanne Van Os and Sharon Hillen.

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