

Name: _____

What is a Wombat?

by Guy Belleranti

Despite its name, the wombat isn't a bat. It's a marsupial from Australia.

Have you ever heard of a marsupial? It's a mammal that stays in its mother's pouch for many months to nurse and develop.

The baby wombat, or joey, is about the size of a jellybean. The joey immediately climbs into its mother's pouch after it is born. Only after six to ten months will the joey begin to leave its mother's pouch for short periods. At around two years, the wombat is ready to live on its own.



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out during the day to sun itself.

There are three species of wombats. The largest is the common wombat, or bare-nosed wombat. This wombat usually lives alone. Some common wombats can be over three feet long and weigh 80 pounds. The two smaller species are both types of hairy-nosed wombats. These wombats live in groups called colonies.

Although a wombat looks pudgy and slow, it can run faster than a track star to get to its burrow. A predator in pursuit of a wombat may be surprised by its defense tactics! First, the wombat's tail is too short to grab. Second, the wombat can fight back with its sharp claws

and teeth. Third, it has a tank-like rump of matted hair, thick skin, cartilage, and bone that makes a great burrow blocker. If an attacker tries to squeeze in, the wombat can crush the attacker against the burrow's walls, which could injure it, or even cause its demise. One thing's for certain: wombats may have an odd name and look a little funny, but these tough marsupials are not going to be messed with!



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About the Author



Guy Belleranti is an author of fiction, poetry, articles, puzzles, and humor for children and adults. He also works as a docent at the Reid Park Zoo in Tucson, Arizona. The information in this article comes from his experiences teaching children about the wild animals at the zoo.

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1. In which part of the world would you see a wombat in its natural habitat?
 - a. the Northern Hemisphere
 - b. the Southern Hemisphere
 - c. the Eastern Hemisphere
 - d. both b and c
2. At what age can a baby wombat, or joey, live on its own?
 - a. as soon as it is born
 - b. around one year
 - c. six to ten months
 - d. around two years



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4. Which animals are predators of the wombat?
 - a. Koalas and Tasmanian devils
 - b. Tasmanian devils and dingoes
 - c. Kangaroos and dingoes
 - d. Koalas and kangaroos
5. Identify the statement about wombats that is false.
 - a. The wombat lives in extensive underground burrows.
 - b. The wombat is an omnivore; it eats both meat and plants.
 - c. The wombat doesn't climb trees, but it is a good swimmer.
 - d. The wombat is nocturnal, or active at night.

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Match each vocabulary word from the article with the correct definition.

_____ 1. pudgy

a. tangled; knotted

_____ 2. vegetation

b. firm, rubber-like tissue found in certain parts of the body

_____ 3. colonies

c. death; downfall



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_____ 6. demise

f. plump; chubby

_____ 7. cartilage

g. groups of wombats living together

_____ 8. pursuit

h. grow and mature

_____ 9. develop

i. plant life

_____ 10. immediately

j. intricate; complicated

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In the article, "What is a Wombat?" you learned that a wombat is a type of marsupial, which is a mammal that stays in its mother's pouch for many months to grow and develop.



Choose another marsupial and write about it on the lines below.

Provide **three interesting facts** about your marsupial. Also give **one similarity** between your marsupial and the wombat. If you use the Internet (with your teacher's permission), be sure to give the web address of your Internet source at the bottom of this page.



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ANSWER KEY

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1. In which part of the world would you see a wombat in its natural habitat? **d**

- a. the Northern Hemisphere
- c. the Eastern Hemisphere

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- d. both b and c**

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- d.** The wombat is nocturnal, or active at night.

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Match each vocabulary word from the article with the correct definition.

f 1. pudgy

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d 10. immediately

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