

Junior Ranger Nature Notes



FOOD FOR ALL, AND A HOUSE TOO!

When flying termites emerge, birds, lizards, snakes, frogs, microbats ants and other insects gorge themselves on the banquet. Some animals also squat in termite nests, making themselves right at home.

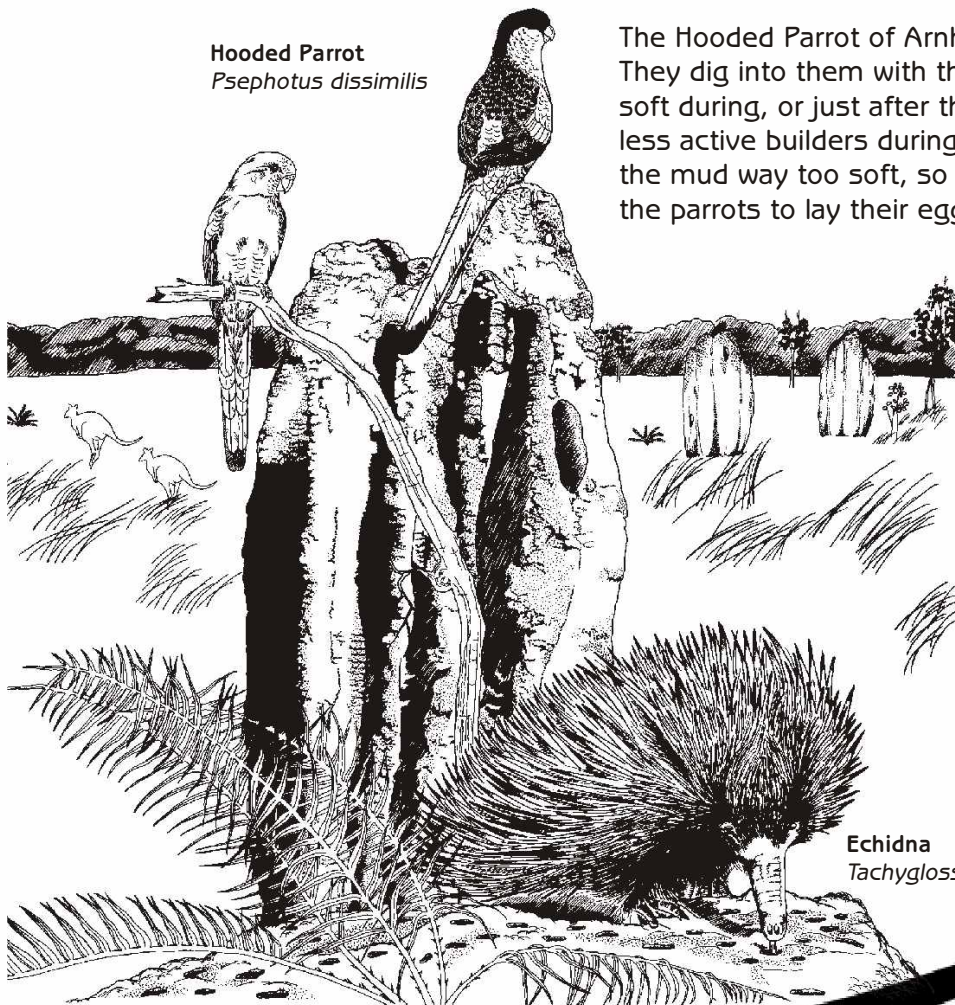
Ants are a termites worst enemy. Remember the gory battle scene from the movie *ANTZ*? But to ants termites are a source of food and their mounds are even a place to live after an invasion battle.



Frilled lizards feed largely on termites as do geckoes, legless lizards and skinks. Blind snakes also enjoy the feast. Goannas are attracted to termite mounds to feed on those that squat or eat there.

Hooded Parrot
Psephotus dissimilis

The Hooded Parrot of Arnhem Land nests in termite mounds. They dig into them with their beaks when they are damp and soft during, or just after the wet season. The termites are less active builders during the wet because the rains make the mud way too soft, so January to March is a good time for the parrots to lay their eggs.



Kingfishers may also use termite mounds to nest in. The Blue-winged Kookaburra and Sacred Kingfisher are two such birds.

Echidnas break into termite mounds and feed on the inhabitants. They have strong claws on their forepaws and a long sticky tongue for extracting termites. They eat a lot of dirt in the process. This forms the bulk of their distinctive, cylindrical poo (scat).

Echidna
Tachyglossus aculeatus



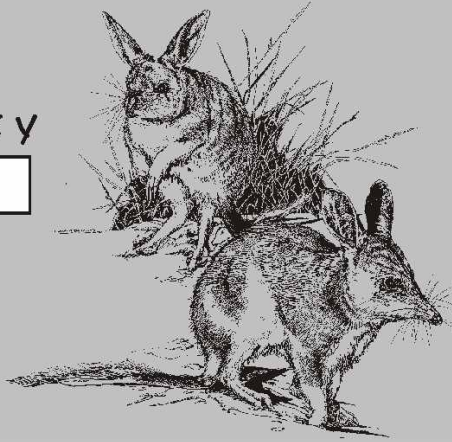
Cylindrical dropping

MAMMAL ANT MUNCHERS

Termites are an important part of the diet for many other mammals other than the Echidna. Cross out every second letter to find out the names of a couple from central Australia.

B z i b l m b x y

--	--	--	--	--	--



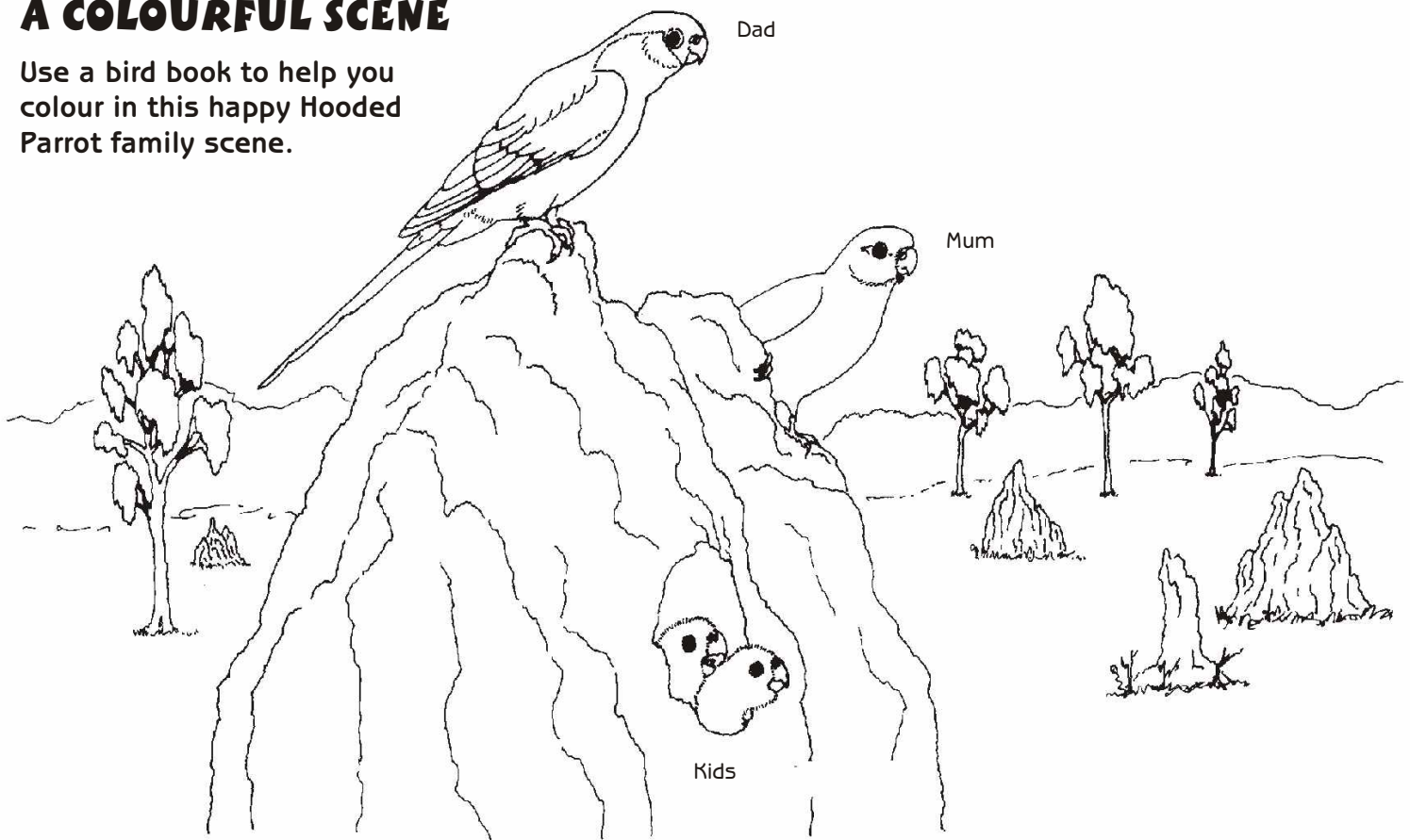
Stripe-faced

D c u l n w n u a x r o t

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

A COLOURFUL SCENE

Use a bird book to help you colour in this happy Hooded Parrot family scene.



Want to learn more about termites?

Check out the book *Termites of the Top End* by Alan Andersen and Peter Jacklyn. It has great colour photographs and loads of information.

