

YOU can be a herpetologist!

What's a herpetologist?

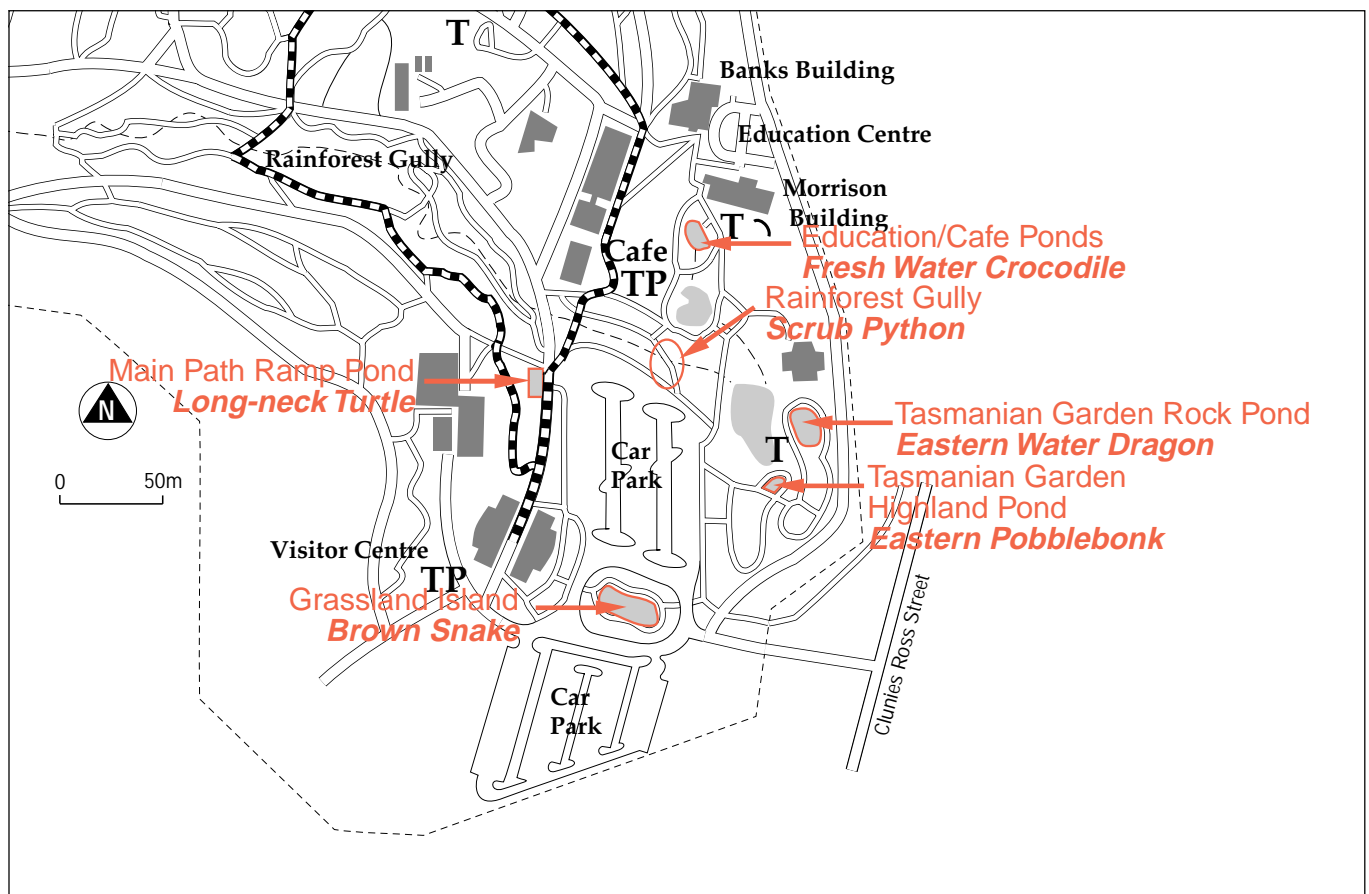
Herpetologists are scientists who study herpetofauna. You may think you've never heard of 'herpetofauna' before but you have!

Snakes, lizards, frogs and crocodiles. You probably already know them as 'reptiles' and 'amphibians'. Can you think of any more animals that belong to this group?

Here's your chance to investigate possible habitats of some different Australian reptiles and amphibians.

What to do:

- Use the map to find the different habitats marked there. It doesn't matter where you start. Any of the six habitats will do as a starting point.
- Once you are in the right place, read the clues! They will give you some ideas about the features of this habitat that suit a particular reptile or amphibian.
- *But after you read the clues, it's up to you!* Your challenge is to observe and discover why these different habitats suit the different animals (or are *not* suitable for them!).



Eastern Water Dragon



ANBG



Did you know...

...that the Eastern Water Dragon hibernates when it gets cold? In the Gardens it can be seen from late spring to early autumn. Who knows? Maybe there is one hibernating under the rock nearest to you!

Here is a list of clues about the Eastern Water Dragon. Look carefully at these ponds and all around them and try to link each clue with a habitat feature to match:

Clues	Observe and Discover
The dragon's flattened tail is specially adapted to swimming.	Suggest why this might be useful in this habitat. (Not all the clues are as easy as this!)
Eastern Water Dragons are omnivorous. This means that they will eat everything from flowers to berries, insects to frogs.	Spot some things that might become dragon-lunch.
All reptiles including the Eastern Water Dragon are cold-blooded (poikilothermic). This means that they rely on the sun to keep warm and active.	Look around and suggest how they do this.

So now you have discovered several features of this particular area that make it a suitable habitat for Eastern Water Dragons. On a sunny summer's day you might even see one! If you *don't*, perhaps the last clue explains why.

If you were an Eastern Water Dragon...

...suggest other aspects of this habitat you might enjoy.

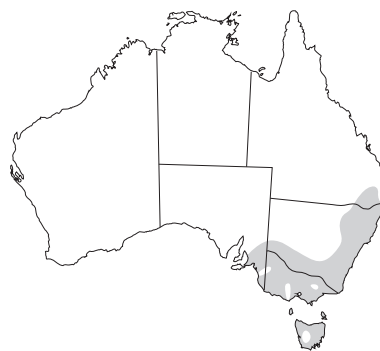
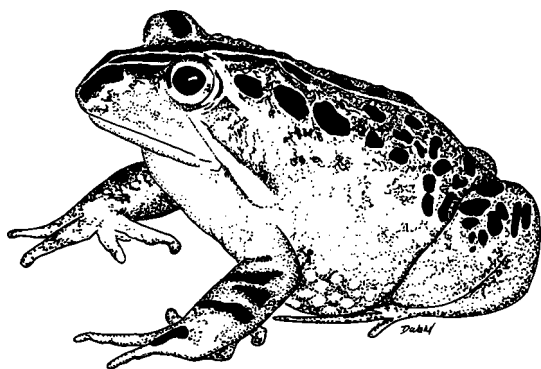
Can you think of anything here that you might *not* like?

Challenge!

Make a summary of the ideal conditions for the survival of this reptile. Which ones do you think are more important?



Eastern Pobblebonk Frog



ANBG

Did you know...

...that the Eastern Pobblebonk gets its name from the sound it makes? Its call sounds like a short, deep 'plonk' or 'bonk'. *Pobblebonk* comes from the sound they make when several of them join in a chorus.

Another interesting fact about frogs is that they are good environmental indicators because they absorb chemicals through their damp skin. So... lots of frogs probably means a healthy environment.

Clues	Observe and Discover
This frog has a damp skin which needs to stay that way.	What habitat features in this area might allow the frog to stay moist?
Another way this frog stays damp is to burrow under the ground.	Can you see a place in this area where an Eastern Pobblebonk might burrow?
The Eastern Pobblebonk is very elusive, and is often hidden by the vegetation and burrows.	Suggest why this might be a good place for catching prey, and at the same time not becoming prey.

Now you have discovered some of the features that suit an Eastern Pobblebonk. How do the clues help to explain why you probably won't *see* one here? But there might be one burrowed just below where you are standing!

If you were an Eastern Pobblebonk...

...suggest why would you keep very quiet if there were lots of noisy kids around.

Challenge!

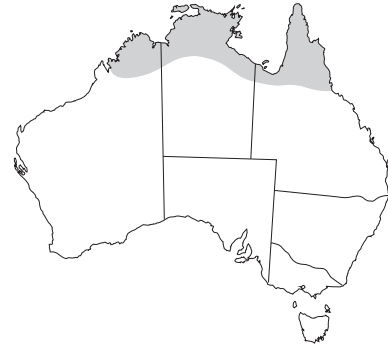
Make a summary of the ideal conditions for the survival of this amphibian. Which ones do you think are more important?



Freshwater Crocodile



Scott Thomson



Did you know...

... that a Freshwater Crocodile can grow to be three metres in length! How tall are you? How do you compare in size? How many teeth do **you** have? How sharp are they?

Clues	Observe and Discover
This crocodile lives in fresh water.	Does this habitat provide this?
This crocodile is often found basking on muddy slopes at the water's edge.	Can you see one? Muddy slope, that is!
This crocodile eats crustaceans, frogs, fish, other reptiles, small birds and mammals.	Does this habitat provide enough of these?
These prey depend heavily on rapidly growing water plant life.	Does this habitat provide conditions suitable for rapid water plant growth?

Now you have discovered some of the features that suit the Freshwater Crocodile. Why do you think that there is no chance of finding one here at the Gardens?

If you were a Freshwater Crocodile...

... how happy would you be living in the Gardens?

Challenge!

Make a summary of the ideal conditions for the survival of this reptile. Which ones do you think are more important?



Scrub Python



Scott Thomson



Did you know...

... that the Scrub Python is Australia's largest snake? It can grow to be over eight metres long! But don't worry — it's not poisonous! Hang on — it can still give you a nasty bite!

Clues	Observe and Discover
The skin of these snakes is olive-brown above and cream below.	Suggest how well it might camouflage itself in this habitat.
This snake is generally found in rainforest and woodlands, and can sometimes be found in the branches of trees.	Suggest features of this habitat that fit this description well. Suggest features of an ideal tree for this large snake.
This snake feeds on a wide variety of vertebrates.	Suggest some tropical vertebrates this snake might eat. Suggest the part played by plants in the survival of this snake.

Now you have discovered some of the features that suit the Scrub Python. Why do you think that there is no chance of finding one here at the Gardens?

If you were Scrub Python...

...suggest features of an ideal woodland or forest setting for your home.

Challenge!

Make a summary of the ideal conditions for the survival of this reptile. Which ones do you think are more important?



Brown Snake



ANBG



The Brown Snake is one of the most venomous in the world. If you see ANY snake here at the Gardens, **stand very still until it goes away**, then tell a member of staff where you saw it.

Did you know...

...that the Brown Snake is not always brown? It can range from the lightest tan to almost black.

Clues	Observe and Discover
Snakes don't 'hear' as we do. They pick up sound as vibrations in the soil.	Suggest (and demonstrate) the best way to make these snakes aware that you are approaching.
Brown snakes can grow up to 2.5 metres long. That's a lot of snake!	What might this habitat offer by way of camouflage?
Brown Snakes eat small mammals and reptiles.	Suggest where plants belong in this food chain.

If you were a Brown Snake...

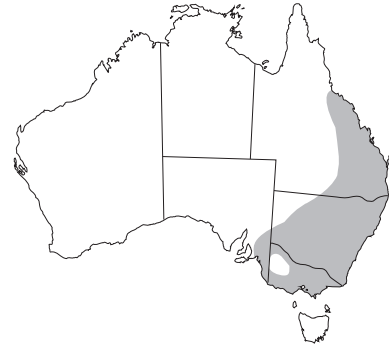
...would you choose to live here at the Gardens?

Challenge!

Make a summary of the ideal conditions for the survival of this reptile. Which ones do you think are more important?



Eastern Long-neck Turtle



Did you know...

... that even though it is cold-blooded (like all reptiles and amphibians), this species is tolerant of cold conditions. Breeding populations are even found near Cooma, in the Australian Alps!

Clues	Observe and Discover
This species lives in water, but is also found on land.	Suggest what water animals the turtle might eat.
	Suggest some water plants the prey organisms might eat.
The brittle eggs are laid on land.	Suggest a suitable place to dig. (Your answer might give you one reason why we haven't found turtle eggs here.)

If you were an Eastern Long-neck Turtle...

...what other features might you put on your wish list for this particular spot?

Challenge!

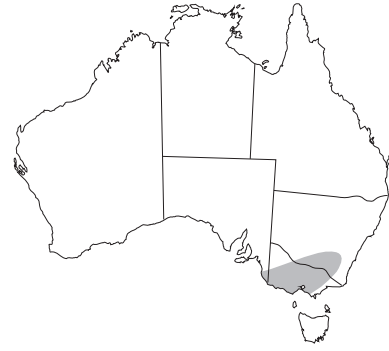
Make a summary of the ideal conditions for the survival of this reptile. Which ones do you think are more important?



Striped Legless Lizard



Will Osborne



Did you know...

...that the Queen couldn't land at Canberra Airport because of the Striped Legless Lizard? There is a colony of these lizards on the Majura Plain close to the end of the Canberra Airport runway. It was planned to extend the runway because the Queen's jet needed extra room. But this would have destroyed the Legless Lizard's habitat. So the Queen landed at Sydney instead!

Clues	Observe and Discover
Observe the grasses in this area.	What do you think 'tussock' means?
Observe the grassland closely.	Suggest ways in which grasses like these might help to protect the lizard.
	Suggest what the lizards might find to eat amongst the grasses.
	Suggest how grasslands might help to camouflage this lizard.

If you were a Striped Legless Lizard ...

...what would you want humans to be doing to help you survive?

Challenge!

Make a summary of the ideal conditions for the survival of this reptile. Which ones do you think are more important?



