

Outback Yabbies

FACT SHEET

www.wirraminna.org/drdave-outback/

The outback with its large expanses of Mulga, Leopardwood, sand and Gibba mixed with shrubs and grasses provide homes for little-known or seldom seen native species. One very special animal is the Outback yabby - the blue version of the yabbies we have in south-eastern Australia.

- **Yingka** is the word for yabby in the language of the Ngemba people (near Bourke, NSW). They are good bush tucker, if you cook them properly.
- Outback yabbies are the same species as the yabbies in the south-east of Australia: *Cherax destructor* or the Common yabby. *Cherax* is the Greek word for "pointed stake" and *destructor* means "one who destroys" because they can burrow into dam walls and channels, destroying them.
- Yabbies use their tails to swim backwards and avoid predators. They use their walking legs to walk forward. Yabbies use their claws to break up large bits of food into smaller bits and to fight with other yabbies for territory. Watch out, they pinch!
- Outback yabbies are often different colours to south-eastern Australian yabbies because the water is different - a bit more salty with different dissolved minerals. They are often blue or reddish brown with red joints.
- Yabbies don't usually eat meat. They prefer rotting vegetation and algae, but they will scavenge meat if their dam is overcrowded. Yabbies are easy to catch with meat as bait because they want to spread the meat around to grow more algae. Yabbies are great recyclers!
- In times of drought, yabbies can lie dormant (asleep), buried many metres under the ground until the rains come again. After rain, on damp nights, yabbies can walk many kilometres to get to new dams.
- In order to grow, yabbies shed their skin (exoskeleton).
- You can tell a male (boy) yabby from a female (girl) yabby by looking for bumps at the base of the walking legs. Males have bumps on the last set of legs, while girls have bumps on the middle set of legs. When you are fishing for yabbies (yabbing), make sure you throw back the girls so they can breed and raise more yabbies for next time. Eat only the boys.
- Yabbies are listed as Vulnerable by the IUCN Redlist of Threatened Species (International Union for Conservation of Nature) because of the destruction of their natural river and billabong habitats.

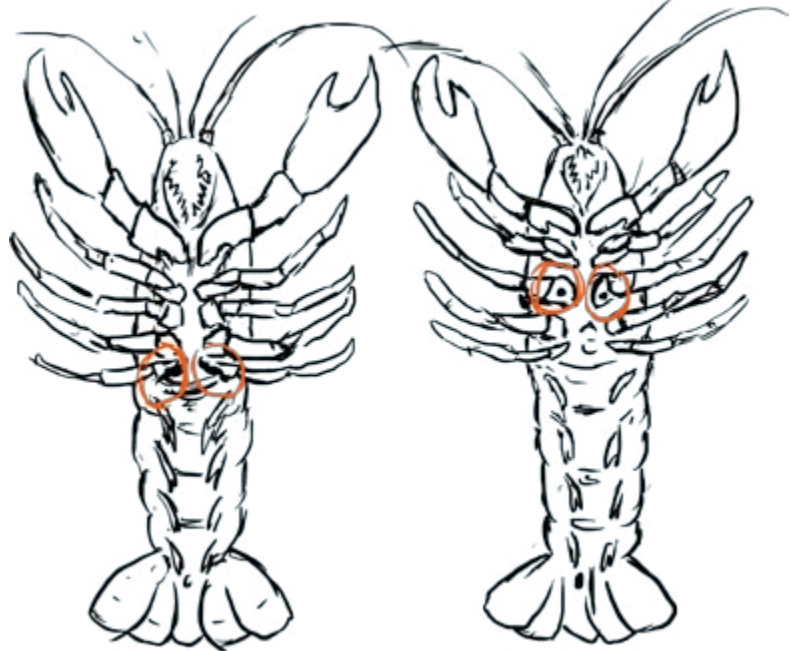


Outback Yabbies

ACTIVITIES

www.wirraminna.org/drdave-outback/

1. What does the scientific name of the Common yabby (*Cherax destructor*) mean?
2. Why is the yabby listed as Vulnerable?
3. What food does the yabby eat?
4. How does the yabby move to a new dam?
5. Describe how you tell boy yabbies from girl yabbies. Identify the yabbies in the diagram.



6. Why is it important to throw back the girl yabbies if you catch them?
7. Find out what the fishing regulations are for yabbies