

# Short-beaked echidna

April 10, 2023

**In news**— Short-beaked echidnas of the semi-arid Dryandra Woodland in Western Australia face searing hot summers.

## How does it beat the heat as compared to other animals?

- They can't pant like **dogs to cool off since their long, thin, sticky tongues** are useful only to feed. Neither do they sweat as we do.
- **Nor do they lick their arms like kangaroos** whose evaporating saliva cools the underlying blood vessels.
- **Vultures squirt watery poop** on their naked legs for the same reason.
- They waddle about during the pleasanter times of day or night. Just as the **thorns of cacti reduce heat loss**, so do the two-inch-long spines of echidnas.
- When the quills are slicked back, they trap warmth. When they are raised, heat escapes.
- Another strategy of the domestic cat-sized animals is to lie flat, pressing their spineless stomachs to the cool soil with their legs and noses stretched out.
- With about 100 mucous secreting glands, **this Australian mammal blows snot bubbles to bring down its body temperature.**

## About Short-beaked echidnas-

- The short-beaked echidna, also called the **short-nosed echidna**, is **one of four living species of echidna** and the only member of the genus Tachyglossus.
- It is **covered in fur and spines and has a distinctive snout** and a specialized tongue, which it uses to catch its insect prey at a great speed.
- It is the **only species of echidna in Australia.**
- It lives in forests and woodlands, heath, grasslands and arid environments.

- The Short-beaked Echidna is found throughout Australia, including Tasmania.
- Using its pointed snout and sharp claws, the Short-beaked Echidna breaks into ant and termite nests and catches its prey by flicking its long sticky tongue in and out.
- It also catches a lot of dirt in the process and this is expelled in the droppings.
- The snout has mechanoreceptors and electroreceptors that help the echidna to detect its surroundings.
- **Like the Platypus, the Short-beaked Echidna is an egg-laying mammal or monotreme** and lays one egg at a time.
- The eggs hatch after about 10 days and the young, emerge blind and hairless.
- Clinging to hairs inside the **mother's pouch, the young echidna suckles for two or three months.**
- Once it develops spines and becomes too prickly, the mother removes it from her pouch and builds a burrow for it. It continues to suckle for the next six months.
- IUCN status: Least Concerned.