

Bobtail

Tiliqua rugosa



WHITEMAN PARK
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Heads or tails?

Bobtails get their name from their short, stubby tails that bear a remarkable resemblance to the shape of their heads. This is a natural defence system, designed to confuse predators. The tail also stores fat, allowing the animals to go for many months without food if necessary.



DID YOU KNOW?

The bobtail appears to have more common names than any other Australian animal, with each region it is found in having a different name for it! These include shingle back, sleepy lizard, pinecone lizard, stumpy-tail, boggi and double-headed lizard (because of its tail!).

Blue-tongue or Bobtail

The blue-tongue lizard is not the same as a bobtail, although it is a close relative. The bobtail has a different shaped head and tail, and has different colouring.

Lunch time

Bobtails eat a wide variety of plants and insects, but prefer mostly plant matter. They are slow-moving creatures so require slow-moving meals! They have love for flowers, gorging themselves when they have the opportunity. Strong jaws allow them to crush snail shells and beetles easily. If you've ever been bitten by a bobtail you could testify to that too, as it is hard to get them to let go when they do!

Mates for life



Unusually for lizards, the bobtails find a compatible mate and remain together, partnering every spring for up to 20 years. Mating between December and April, the females give birth to up to three live young that can measure up to 22cm in length!

Basking in it

Like all lizards, the bobtail is cold-blooded, relying on its surroundings to increase their body temperature. When the weather is cold, they will remain inactive, sheltered under large objects like rocks or logs, or even amongst the leaf litter. (Wills and Kate love their mulch, and will snuggle up, camouflaged and unable to be seen!) When the weather warms, they come out to bask in the sun before foraging for food once warm.

About that tongue...?

That iconic image of a blue tongue is what endears many people to the bobtail and its cousins, but in the wild, they use it to frighten off predators. Turning their heads towards a threat, they open their mouths wide and stick out their big blue tongues to scare. They will also hiss and flatten themselves out to appear bigger. The tongue is also used to 'smell' the air, as the bobtails smell sensors are on the roof of their mouths!



Photos courtesy of Houndstooth Studio