



Bullfrog's Billabong — The facts

Bullfrog's Billabong tells a story of animals coming to live at a billabong.

Events that occur in a story do not necessarily reflect real possibilities. While some aspects may be plausible, children must realise that situations and events depicted should not be interpreted as factual.

To help children understand what aspects of *Bullfrog's Billabong* may be true, I supply the following information. Of course the most obvious fact is that animals don't talk, but anthropomorphism of animals in story (giving them human characteristics such as speech, feelings, and sometimes clothing) is very common and children very quickly come to understand this.

Billabong is the name given to a waterhole in Australia. The waterhole is generally formed when a river changes course, or a flooded river dries up, leaving a small pocket of water, separate from the river.

Bullfrog is the term given to any large frog. Many live in wet, swampy areas, where there is freshwater, including in billabongs. A Bullfrog will eat almost any small animal that will fit in its mouth; including small turtles and crayfish.

Pelicans are birds with large beaks and pouches in which they catch fish to eat. They live near the ocean or in areas where there is freshwater, including near billabongs.

Turtles are reptiles. Some turtles live in the ocean. Other turtles live in freshwater, including rivers, ponds, and billabongs. They eat plants and small animals such as insects and snails, possibly even small crayfish.

Crayfish are crustaceans. The freshwater crayfish of Australia are related to lobsters that live in the sea. Freshwater crayfish live in ponds, swamps, rivers, and other bodies of freshwater, such as billabongs. Crayfish eat mainly decaying plants from the bed of the river or billabong, but will eat anything, including meat.

Platypuses are monotremes (mammals that lay eggs). Platypuses and echidnas, the only known species of monotremes, live only in Australia. Platypuses live in freshwater rivers, streams, and ponds, possibly even billabongs. They eat small animals that live in the muddy river beds, such as worms, insects, and even small crayfish.

Freshwater **crocodiles** live in rivers, creeks and billabongs. They are smaller than saltwater crocodiles and rarely attack humans. However, they do eat many types of small animals; including fish, frogs, birds, reptiles, crustaceans, and mammals.

As you can see, each of the animals depicted in *Bullfrog's Billabong* live in similar habitats, though they may not live in the same habitat. Each of the smaller animals *could* be on the menu for a freshwater crocodile. However, I doubt that even a crocodile would be able to eat all of the animals in the story in one gulp!