

Top End Nature Notes

Junior Ranger

FAB FRILLIES

The sight of a 'Frilly' flashing its full frill in an attempt to look bigger, more ferocious and fearsome, is a common one to Top Enders. In fact this lizard is a celebrity right around the world!

WHAT A 'FRILLING' EXPERIENCE

The largest of Australia's dragons (called Agamids by scientists), the Frilled Lizard, *Chlamydosaurus kingii*, is indeed the 'king' of our 60 or so species. Its large, loose frill around the neck and the ability to quickly run upright on its two back legs make it special in the world of lizards. For us, this makes it really easy to identify.

In the Top End you will see them in woodland country. They especially like areas where there is an open shrubby or grassy ground cover. Check them out in your local parks, golf courses, schoolyards or places like Howard and Berry Springs Nature Parks. Enjoy watching them, but don't try to touch, for although they are harmless they do have sharp teeth and claws and can inflict a painful bite and scratches.

FRILLY FACT FILE

Boys are larger than girls and can reach about 95cm in length and weigh almost a kilogram. Their tails are about twice as long as their bodies.

They are hard to find in trees as they move to the opposite side of the trunk as you look for them

Their sharp claws and long toes help them to clamber up trees.

Underneath the girls are pale yellow but boy bellies are black.

The grey/brown colours and patterns of their rough scaly skin helps them to camouflage as tree bark.

Their frills can measure up to 25cm across; that's about the size of a dinner plate!

Their frill is yellow to black, often with an orange patch under the chin.

Their frill contains several flexible bone-like rods that work like umbrella spokes

Frillies have long, muscly back legs that allow them to quickly run two-legged style to avoid danger.

CENTRALIAN COUSINS

You won't find frillies in Central Australia but you might see one of their large desert cousins. Crack the code to find its name. Replace each letter with the one that comes before it in the alphabet

C F B S E F E E S B H P O



Northern Territory Government



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Have you ever noticed that you are more likely to see a Frilled Lizard in the wet season (Oct. - April) than in the dry? Well it's because during the dry season they sort of 'hibernate'. In fact they slow down their activity, don't eat much and spend most of their time hidden, lounging around in the tree canopy. Sometimes they move from tree to tree. They are just waiting for the good times that come with the onset of the wet season. Within a few hours of the first rain you can expect to see frillies out and about. For with the rain comes the promise of more food and this is then the perfect time to have babies.

FIGHTS AND FLIGHTS OF FANCY

Male frillies aggressively defend their turf from rivals, especially during mating season. Keep an eye out for these spectacular displays, which are all huff and puff but mostly bluff. With colourful frill fully stretched (looking bigger, stronger and scarier) a male will sway side to side, thrash his tail and madly hiss in an effort to scare off any intruder. As a last resort he will engage in fierce combat until the rival runs away or he himself is defeated and flees.

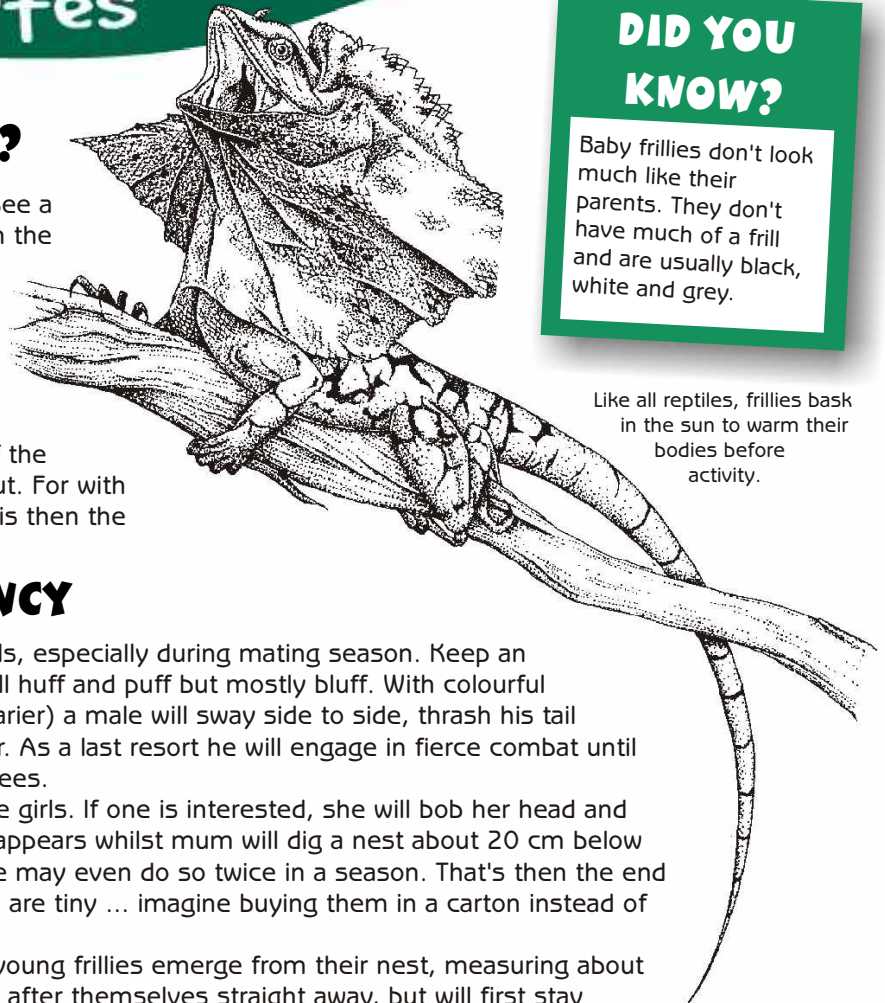
The boys also perform a similar dance to attract the girls. If one is interested, she will bob her head and peacefully stand her ground. After mating, dad disappears whilst mum will dig a nest about 20 cm below ground and lay about 8-14 eggs. In good times she may even do so twice in a season. That's then the end of her job as a parent. At around 5 grams her eggs are tiny ... imagine buying them in a carton instead of 60 gram chicken eggs!

After about 10 weeks warming in the ground, the young frillies emerge from their nest, measuring about as long as your pinkie finger (5 cm). They can look after themselves straight away, but will first stay together with their brothers and sisters for about 10 days, before heading off alone into the big wide world! Each will then spend most of the rest of their lives by themselves.

DID YOU KNOW?

Baby frillies don't look much like their parents. They don't have much of a frill and are usually black, white and grey.

Like all reptiles, frillies bask in the sun to warm their bodies before activity.



FAVOURITE FRILLY FOODS ... WHAT'S ON THE MENU?

Frillies mostly search for their food on the ground (called foraging) in the morning and late arvo. They mainly eat invertebrates (animals without backbones). Can you decode the names of some favourite frilly foods? Replace each letter with the one that comes before it in the alphabet.

H S F F O B O U T

T Q J E F S T

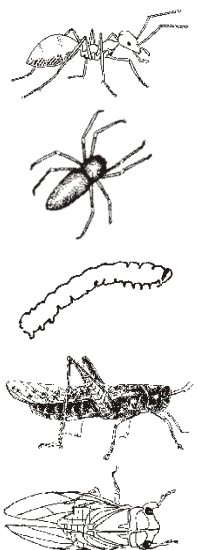
D B U F S Q J M M B S T

H S B T T I P Q Q F S T

D J D B E B T



Use coloured pictures from books to colour in this smiling, hungry frilly.



Want to know more about Frilled Lizards?

Check out the reference book *Reptiles & Amphibians* by Harold Cogger.