**Quirky fact:**
Did you know the Flinders River is Queensland’s longest river?

**Background Information**
Queensland has 13 bioregions and the mid-west comprises characteristic flora, fauna, and environmental conditions that create natural boundaries. Four bioregions lie within the mid-west: Einasleigh Uplands – Northeast; Gulf Plains – Northwest; Mitchell Grass Downs – South; and Desert Uplands – Southeast.

**Einasleigh Uplands**
The Einasleigh Uplands straddles the Great Dividing Range in inland Northeast Queensland. It covers 12,923,100 hectares (7.5 per cent) of Queensland. The area is known as basalt gorge country. Basalt is lava that has weathered to form rich red or black volcanic soils. The Einasleigh area is significant for macropods and has more species of rock wallaby than anywhere in Australia. Endangered animals include the red goshawk, gouldian and star finch and the golden-shouldered parrot. Rare species in the area are the black-necked stork, yellow-naped snake, ghost bat and the cotton pygmy-goose. This bioregion consists of a series of ranges and plateau surfaces, and contains eight protected national parks:
- Bulleringa National Park
- Chillagoe – Mungana Caves National Park
- Dalrymple National Park
- Great Basalt Wall National Park
- Hann Tableland National Park
- Porcupine Gorge National Park
- Undara Volcanic National Park
- Palmer River Goldfields

**Gulf Plains**
The Gulf Plains are characterised by gentle sloping sandstone tablelands along their eastern margin. The area covers 22,143,799 hectares (12 per cent) of Queensland. There is a small port at Kurumba where most of the regional fishing fleet is based and the Gulf and its estuarine wetlands support a strong fishing industry. The Gulf Plains are significant for the very large numbers of migratory waterbirds. The climate has a dry season during winter and a monsoonal wet season in summer. There are 36 rare and threatened fauna species of the Gulf Plains bioregion, including the radjah shelduck, masked owl, hawksbill turtle, and pygmy long-eared bat. The region contains four protected areas:
- The Mitchell – Alice Rivers National Park
- Staaten River National Park
- Lawn Hill Resources Reserve
- Bulleringa National Park

**Mitchell Grass Downs**
As the name suggests, this area is dominated by extensive grasslands of Mitchell grasses. The bioregion covers 23,788,550 hectares (13.8 per cent) of Queensland. Soils are deep, heavy grey or brown clays often with a self-mulching and sometimes stony surface. Soils of the grassland plains are brown, cracking, and sometimes stony clay. Limestone and deeply weathered Cretaceous sediments, sometimes covered by superficial Quaternary deposits, form low hills and ridges. The Mitchell Grass Downs spans the watershed separating many of Queensland’s northern flowing rivers from southern flowing rivers. These rivers supply most of the surface water through the Channel Country bioregion into the Lake Eyre Basin. The Flinders, McKinlay and Gregory Rivers flow from the northern parts of the Mitchell Grass Downs into the Gulf of Carpentaria. Rivers that originate from the Mitchell Grass Downs are the:
- Barcoo
- Thomson
- Diamantina
- Hamilton
- Burdekin
- Georgina

**Factsheet 23 – How can we protect the homes of rare species in the Outback?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Subject</th>
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<tr>
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Species include at least 54 mammals, 225 birds, 21 amphibians and 110 reptiles. The native fauna has adapted to the open, seasonally arid grasslands. Birds are either seed or insect-eating ground dwellers such as the little button-quail, Australian bustard and singing bushlark, or migratory, visiting in the wet season to breed before the dry sets in again. Reptiles and small mammals live in the soil cracks and some mammals found only in this habitat include the Julia Creek Dunnart, narrow-nosed planigale, and Forrest’s mouse. Rare reptiles such as the bearded dragon, Collett’s snake or ‘Downs Tiger’ and the shinsk are also native to the region.

**Desert Uplands**

The Desert Uplands lie in central northern Queensland, straddling the Great Dividing Range between Blackall and Pentland. Sandstone ranges and sand plains dominate this bioregion and coal deposits can be found deep down. The Desert Uplands cover 7,032,297 hectares (4 per cent) of Queensland. Although not a true desert, the bioregion has desert-like characteristics. With a low rainfall the sandy soils are relatively infertile.

- White Mountain National Park
- White Mountain Resource Reserve
- Morrinya National Park
- Forest Den National Park

### Inquiry Questions

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<th>Years</th>
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<td>How do fire and floods impact on creatures like bilbies?</td>
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<td>What are the consequences of human use and management of landscape for creatures like bilbies?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>How have bilbies adapted to live in this environment?</td>
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<td>How are environmental changes affecting them?</td>
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<td>How do bilbies fit into a food web?</td>
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<td>How are science understandings helping people protect bilbies?</td>
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</table>

**Points of Interest**

**Porcupine Gorge, via Hughenden**

Kennedy Developmental Road (73 kms north of Hughenden), via Hughenden QLD 4821

- At the Creek, Julia Creek Visitor Information Centre
  - www.atthecreek.com.au
- White Mountains National Park, via Hughenden
- Morrinya National Park, via Hughenden
- Diamantina National Park, via Bedourie
- Boodjamulla (Lawn Hill) National Park, via Gregory

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Queensland Department of Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts
  - www.qld.gov.au/environment/plants-animals/
- National Parks Association of Queensland
  - Unit 9, 36 Finchley St, Milton QLD 4064
  - Phone: (07) 3367 0878
  - www.npaq.org.au
- Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection
  - Source: Factsheets on all environmental management
  - www.ehp.qld.gov.au/
- Australian Department of the Environment
  - www.environment.gov.au/node/2281

### REFERENCES

- Heritage Protection
  - www.ehp.qld.gov.au/

### FURTHER INFORMATION

- Flinders Discovery Centre
  - 37 Gray Street, Hughenden QLD 4821
  - Phone: (07) 4741 2970
  - Email: info@flinders.qld.gov.au
  - www.flinders.qld.gov.au

- At the Creek
  - 34 Burke Street, Julia Creek Qld 4823
  - Australia
  - Phone: (07) 4746 7690
  - Email: tourism@mcchinlay.qld.gov.au