

## Mudskipper

The mudskipper is one of the most bizarre fish found in the mangrove. Its eyes are perched on its head, it climbs trees and does a curious skipping 'dance' over the mudflats. It appears to be just as much at home on the land as in the water.

Mudskippers are found in the mangrove forests of Northern Australia.

They can walk around using their pectoral fins as 'limbs' or crutches in conjunction with the ventral fin, and sometimes using these to 'grip' on a mangrove root. For quick movements they use their body and tail fin to push it forward, and the pectorals to help it jump and skip.

Like all fish, mudskippers breathe using gills. The secret to how they breathe out of water is that they have little packets of water near the gills to keep them wet and thus breathe. This unusual fish can absorb oxygen through their moist skin and thus enables them to travel across the moist areas of river banks.

The mudskipper is then able to remain on land for several hours at a time as their gills are being protected from drying by special covers. The skin is thick and scaly to protect the body from drying out and being scratched. Its blotchy skin colour is a good camouflage.

The 'periscope' eyes enable it to have a greater coverage and warning of predators compared to the normal side positioning of most fish. The eyes can be turned so the fish can see all around. It often wets its eyes by pulling them into the head.

The male mudskipper begins breeding by attracting a female by showing off colours and patterns on his back. They both go into a burrow where the male fertilizes the egg as the female lays them.

The eggs hatch later, usually at high tide.

Mudskippers feed on small crustaceans and fish and grow to about 30cm in length

The fish remains in its burrow at high tide.

