



## You can help protect platypus

The platypus is one of Australia's most amazing animals. Unfortunately, there is growing evidence that numbers are declining in some areas.

There is an urgent need to assess platypus distribution, where they are common and where they have disappeared.

### Here's what you can do:

- Take your litter with you and dispose of appropriately. Rubbish that washes into waterways is a direct threat to the platypus. Plastic rings found on milk and other bottles and medicine containers should be cut before disposal.
- Reduce your reliance on, and use of plastic bags. Animals, not just platypus, can suffer cruel and lingering deaths after ingesting plastic bags.
- Become involved in the care of your local waterways. Groups encouraging retention of native vegetation, weed control, and planting and restoration of areas subject to erosion are a good start. Contact your local council, bushcare or landcare group.
- Protect riparian habitats by fencing waterways and providing alternate water access (eg. troughs) for animals.
- Only pump from waterways in times of good flows. Consider your water storage capacity to sustain your needs through dry periods.
- Join Wildlife Queensland and start monitoring platypus in your local area.
- Report sightings to Wildlife Queensland's PlatypusWatch program.

## Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland



The Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland (WPSQ) is committed to a sustainable future for people and wildlife.

Formed in 1962, WPSQ is the oldest and most respected environment group in Queensland and is actively involved in community conservation as well as addressing statewide environmental concerns.



### PlatypusWatch

PlatypusWatch is an initiative of WPSQ and is a community-based program to encourage observation and reporting of platypus in the wild.



WPSQ publishes Wildlife Australia magazine celebrating

the beauty and wonder of Australia's wild creatures and wild places.

If you are interested in sharing your passion for nature with others, joining WPSQ or subscribing to Wildlife Australia magazine, contact us at:

### Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland

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[www.wildlife.org.au](http://www.wildlife.org.au)

# Looking out for Platypus





## About Platypus

- The platypus is an iconic Australian animal. Along with the echidna, the platypus forms part of an exclusive mammal grouping called the monotremes. They are the world's only egg-laying mammals.
- The platypus is the only venomous Australian mammal. The male platypus can inject venom using a sharp hollow claw-like spur located just above the heel of each hind leg.
- Platypus have three layers of thick brown fur. The density of their coat is an incredible 600 - 900 hairs per square millimetre which keeps water from penetrating and protects them from the cold.

## About PlatypusWatch

PlatypusWatch is a Wildlife Queensland program which collects records of sightings and other information from the public as well as through its network of supporters. By mapping where platypus occur, PlatypusWatch can assess the status of platypus populations and this information can be used to identify where conservation actions are most urgently needed. If you have ever seen a platypus in the wild, you can make a valuable contribution to PlatypusWatch by providing details of your sightings online at [www.wildlife.org.au](http://www.wildlife.org.au)



## Where do platypus live?

- Platypus are found in rivers, streams, lakes and ponds throughout eastern Australia and Tasmania.
- Spending up to half their day in the water feeding; platypus then retire to the safety of their creek bank burrows or bask on the creek bank.
- Platypus are able to survive in suburban waterways in Brisbane and Melbourne, and in many other smaller towns within their range.



## What do platypus eat?

- A healthy appetite for worms, shrimp, insect larvae and other small animals enables the platypus to eat up to a third of their body weight each day.
- Swimming with their eyes and ears shut, platypus rely on electro-receptors in their sensitive bill to detect electrical currents in the water which helps to locate prey.
- Platypus have no teeth and do not eat underwater; instead they store food in their cheek pouches, swim to the surface to crush their prey with tough horny pads on their upper and lower jaws.



## Threats to platypus

Like other water dependent animals, platypus rely on the waterway in which they live for all their survival needs: finding food, avoiding predators, creating burrows and raising young.

Changes to their foraging habitat, either water quality or to their direct food source, can threaten the platypus. Food sources can be affected by sedimentation resulting from clearing of riparian (creekside) vegetation or from stock accessing creeks. Foraging habitat can be affected by domestic and commercial water pumping out of creeks which can empty small pools, and by dams which change the flow regime of waterways. Pumping pools dry, even temporarily, kills the animals that platypus rely on. Chemical pollution from streets and households can poison the platypus' food supply and can lead to deoxygenation of water.

Litter also poses a threat to platypus. Animals become entangled in plastic rings, six-pack holders and wire.

