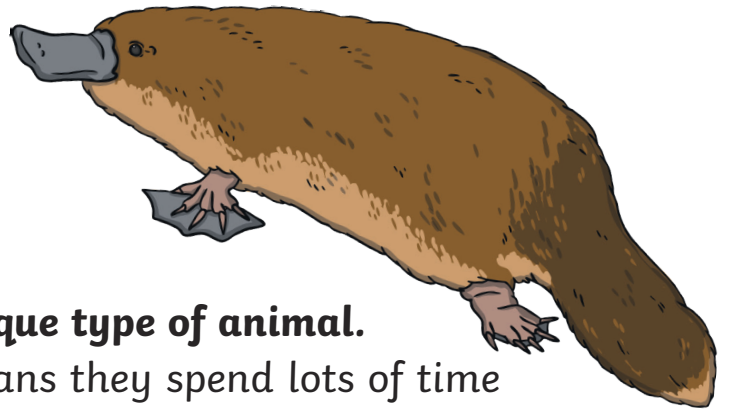


# What is a Duck-Billed Platypus?

**Species:** Mammal

**Location:** Eastern Australia

**Diet:** Carnivore

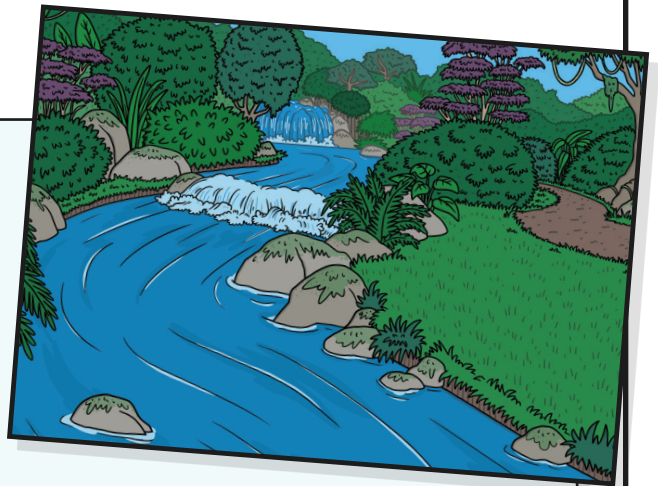


**Duck-billed platypuses are a unique type of animal.**

They are semi-aquatic, which means they spend lots of time both in the water and on land. They are also one of the only types of mammals that lay eggs.

## Habitat

These curious creatures are only found in eastern parts of Australia, including the island of Tasmania. They like to live in and around cool streams and rivers and have been spotted both in the highlands and the tropical rainforests nearer the coasts. The platypus is mostly nocturnal, meaning that they are most active during the night.



## Special Skills

As well as looking like a strange mixture of a duck, a beaver and an otter, the platypus has lots of amazing skills.

## Swimming

The platypus is a strong swimmer and spends most of its life in the water. It can dive for around 30 to 40 seconds at a time. The wide tail helps it to change direction underwater.

## Electrolocation

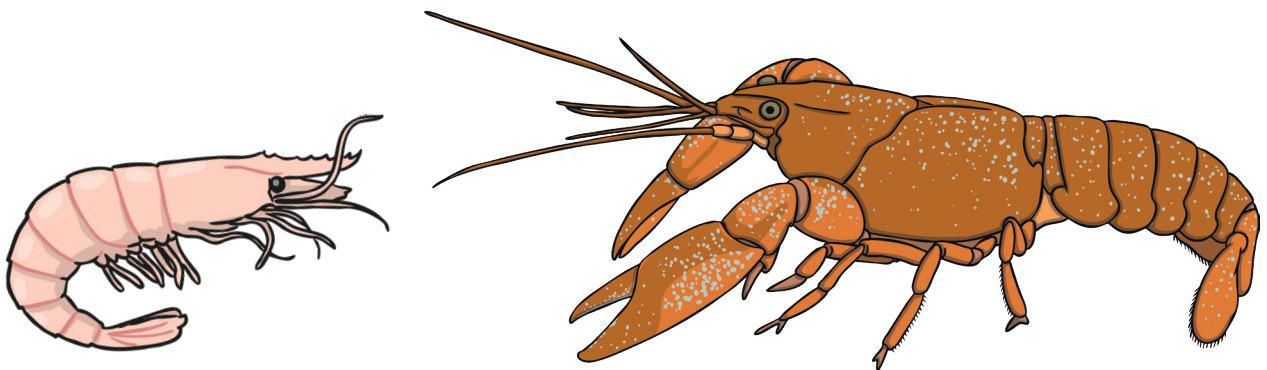
The platypus has special sensors on its bill which detect movements in the water. It closes its eyes, ears and nose when it swims and uses the sensors to locate its prey.

## Venom

Both the male and female platypus have spurs (a type of bone) on their ankles. In the male, these spurs contain venom. This venom is strong enough to hurt a human and even kill small animals.

## Diet and Predators

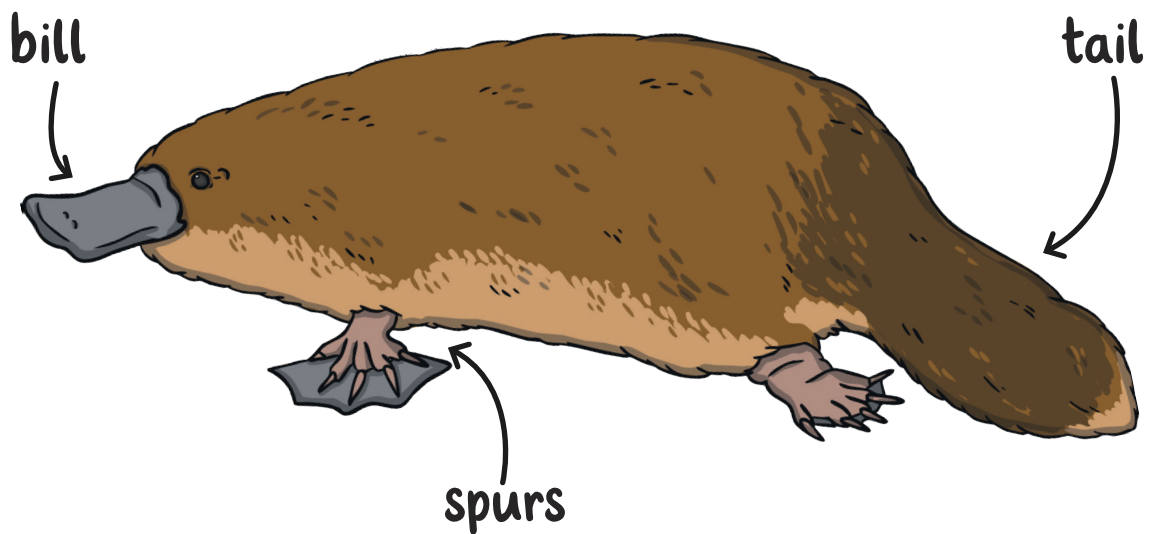
As a carnivore, the platypus is a meat-eater. The platypus uses its swimming and hunting skills to feast on creatures such as yabbies (similar to a lobster), small fish and shrimp. It will also eat worms and insect larvae, which it digs out of the riverbeds using its bill. It collects food in its cheek pouches and takes it back to land to eat. Predators like snakes, owls and goannas (a type of lizard) can be dangerous to the platypus.



## Fun Facts

When scientists examined the platypus for the first time in 1799, they thought that it was fake!

The name platypus means flat foot.



# Questions

1.

Where can you find the duck-billed platypus? Circle the correct answer.

Western Australia

Eastern Australia

Southern Australia

2.

Match these words with their meanings.

carnivore

active at night

electrolocation

spends time on land and water

nocturnal

eats meat

semi-aquatic

sensors detect movement in water

3.

The duck-billed platypus is a unique type of animal.

What does unique mean?

4.

Where and when might be the best time to spot a platypus in the wild? Tick all that apply.

- during day time
- in the tropical rainforests
- in the desert
- in a stream
- up a tree
- during night time
- in the highlands

5.

Tick the boxes to show if the following statements are true or false.

**true**    **false**

- |                       |                       |  |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | The platypus lays eggs.  |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | The name platypus means wide-bill.                               |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | The platypus eats lizards called goannas.                        |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | The platypus can dive underwater for 30 to 40 seconds at a time. |



**Why do you think that the male duck-billed platypus has a venomous spur?**



**What is special about the way that the platypus hunts and eats?**

# Answers

1. Where can you find the duck-billed platypus? Circle the correct answer.

**Western Australia**

**Eastern Australia**

**Southern Australia**

2. Match these words with their meanings.

<b>carnivore</b>	—	<b>active at night</b>
<b>electrolocation</b>	—	<b>spends time on land and water</b>
<b>nocturnal</b>	—	<b>eats meat</b>
<b>semi-aquatic</b>	—	<b>sensors detect movement in water</b>

3. The duck-billed platypus is a unique type of animal.

What does unique mean?

**special or one of a kind**

4. Where and when might be the best time to spot a platypus in the wild?  
Tick all that apply.

- during day time**
- in the tropical rainforests**
- in the desert**
- in a stream**
- up a tree**
- during night time**
- in the highlands**

5. Tick the boxes to show if the following statements are true or false.

**true**      **false**



The platypus lays eggs.



The name platypus means wide-bill.



The platypus eats lizards called goannas.



The platypus can dive underwater for 30 to 40 seconds at a time.

6. Why do you think that the male duck-billed platypus has a venomous spur?

**Child's own answer using clues from the text, for example:**

**I think the male has a venomous spur to fight away predators or to impress the female.**

7. What is special about the way that the platypus hunts and eats?

**Answer should mention at least one of the following points:**

- **It is a strong swimmer that can dive for 30 - 40 seconds.**
- **It can use electrolocation to find its prey using the sensors on its bill.**
- **It can use its bill to dig worms and insect larvae from the riverbed.**
- **It stores food in its cheeks to eat when it gets back to land.**