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Illegal traps kill platypuses

ERROL SMITH

A YARRAMALONG resident fighting to stop the destruction of platypuses in waterways said he was fed up with buck passing by government departments.

Steve Woodley said neither the National Parks and Wildlife Service nor the Fisheries Department would accept any responsibility.

"National Parks say platypuses are the responsibility of Fisheries, and Fisheries tell me that platypuses are not fish so they don't come under their jurisdiction," he said.

"I've been asking for clarification for months. It's now at the point where they won't even return my phone calls. It's an absolute farce."

Mr Woodley was alerted to the destruction of the platypus population months ago when he found five trapped in illegal nets used to catch yabbies and freshwater crayfish.

He knew of another that had died under similar circumstances.

"What makes it more confusing is that NSW Fisheries and National Parks, in November 2003, banned the traps in any region where platypuses live," Mr Woodley said.

"Yet they are still sold at department stores and some fishing tackle shops."

During a visit to a school, Mr



CALL TO ARMS: Steve Woodley wants action on illegal traps.

Picture: WAIDE MAGUIRE

Woodley discovered 90 per cent of the children had a yabby trap at home and none of them knew that the traps were illegal.

Mr Woodley was so concerned that he is now working with the Department of Education's Rumbalara Environmental

Studies Unit to spread the word on illegal traps and the effect they have on platypuses.

"Having seen first-hand the accidental but deeply disturbing, death of five platypuses, I felt compelled to try to educate people about what is happening," he said.

Wyong Council's catchment management officer Ken Brookes said it was disturbing enough people were using the illegal traps, let alone killing native wildlife in the process.

"These very shy and secretive creatures are a protected native



The platypus.

Rare mammals need protection

THE platypus lives in deeper pools and billabongs along most of the freshwater streams in Wyong shire's water supply catchments.

Platypuses are an air-breathing mammal and can remain under water for only minutes.

If you know of any platypus deaths or would like further information, contact council's catchment management officer, Ken Brookes, on 4350 5220.

animal so it is devastating they are being killed off by careless individuals breaking the law," he said.

Mr Brookes said the creatures could easily enter the traps but died when they were unable to get out.