The Platypus Factor and Water Fit for Life

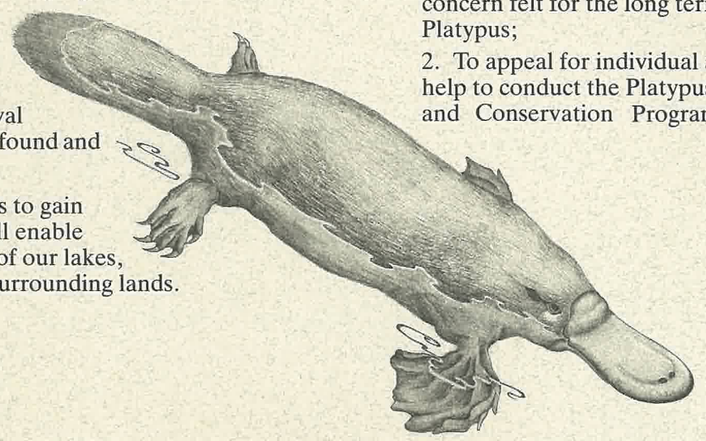
It seems fairly certain that water fit for Platypus will also sustain other wildlife that depends on it. A water quality suitable for the survival of a healthy Platypus population will probably also indicate a waterway's ability to sustain many other forms of life, including humans.

Effective action to ensure the conservation of Platypus will help to conserve many other living things.

Something Different

An unusual aspect of this program is that it is being carried out before the species is threatened with extinction and while solutions to its survival problems can still be found and implemented.

The program's goal is to gain knowledge which will enable better management of our lakes, streams, rivers and surrounding lands.



Taronga Zoo Committed to Conservation

It is fitting that with a Platypus for its logo, Sydney's Taronga Zoo has initiated and is co-ordinating this vital program. Part of Taronga Zoo's charter is a commitment to conservation and research.

The Zoo expends much time, money and effort on its programs in this area; it also provides resources and a base for a wide variety of research being conducted at universities and other scientific institutions.

Taronga Zoo's purpose in publishing this pamphlet is:

1. To arouse community awareness of the concern felt for the long term safety of the Platypus;
2. To appeal for individual and corporate help to conduct the Platypus Breeding and Conservation Program.

A Team Effort

Taronga Zoo is collaborating on the Platypus Program with other Australian zoos and universities as well as Federal and State authorities and individual experts.

Taronga Zoo gratefully acknowledges funding from the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service and the support of Gunninah Consultants.

Taronga Zoo thanks S.C. Johnson & Son for a major contribution towards funding this program and welcomes the help of its staff as research volunteers.

TARONGA ZOO
Bradleys Head Road,
Mosman, NSW 2088
Tel: (02) 969 2777
Fax: (02) 969 7515

WESTERN PLAINS ZOO
Obley Road, Dubbo, NSW 2830
Tel: (068) 82 5888
Fax: (068) 84 1722

Enquiries should be addressed to:
Dr Jack Giles
Deputy Director
Zoological Parks Board
of New South Wales
PO Box 20
MOSMAN NSW 2088
Tel: (02) 969 2777
Fax: (02) 969 7515

Photography by Esther Beaton and B Fanning
Illustrations by Dominic Fanning

Recycled Paper

Platypus Breeding and Conservation Program

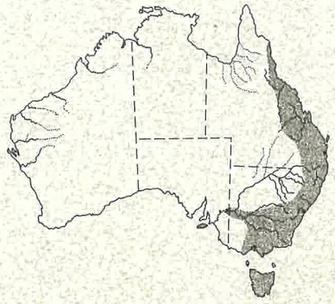
New South Wales' TWO GREAT ZOOS

IS THE PLATYPUS IN PERIL?

Platypus appear to have declined in numbers and distribution. To ensure the future of the species we need to know what are the most effective methods of protecting our waterways to guarantee the conservation of this extraordinary Australian animal.

The time to act is NOW.

THE NEW SOUTH WALES GOVERNMENT
Putting people first by managing better



Unique and Australian

The Platypus is unique to Australia and is a most remarkable animal. It is one of only three surviving species of the egg laying mammals or monotremes.

Though a mammal it has a duck-like bill, webbed feet, a tail like a beaver and the males even have poison spurs! It spends a lot of time swimming and feeding in the water and has electric receptors in its bill to help it find its food.

Freshwater lakes, rivers and streams on the eastern side of the continent are the habitat of this extraordinary animal. These have been much changed in the past 200 years by damming of rivers, clearing and agricultural activities.

An International Issue

In an international workshop on Platypus Biology and Conservation held at Taronga Zoo in 1988, experts discussed current knowledge of the Platypus.

This review of our "information pool" demonstrated that we understand very little about the biology of the Platypus, its habitat requirements and the impact of human activities on its environment and survival.

Is the Platypus in peril?

Taronga Zoo's Platypus Breeding and Conservation Program arose out of international concern about the future of the Platypus.

An Uncertain Future

Although Platypus still appear to be common, they have disappeared from some areas where they once lived. The health and vitality of remaining populations is by no means certain. Now is the time to plan for the long-term survival of the Platypus.

The Platypus Conservation Program

To meet this challenge, Taronga Zoo is co-ordinating a major conservation effort throughout the five Australian States in which Platypus are found.

What must be done to ensure conservation of Platypus?

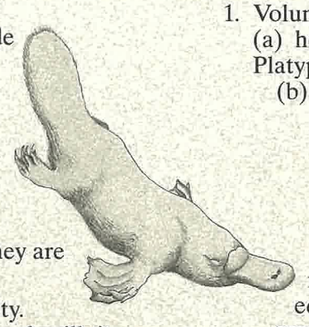
1. The impact of agriculture and industry on Platypus habitat and populations must be assessed.

2. A broad overview of the condition of Platypus habitat is required, through field surveys and examination of satellite images and aerial photographs.

3. The water quality and streamside habitat needs of the Platypus must be investigated so that problem areas can be identified.

4. Research is necessary to establish how many Platypus remain, where they are found, the state of their health and whether they are breeding.

5. Platypus must be bred in captivity. Information gained from field research will, it is hoped, provide the conditions necessary to breed these animals, which have only once reproduced successfully in captivity.



6. Recommendations must be made on the basis of these studies to guide appropriate land and waste management to ensure Platypus survival.

The community can help

1. Volunteers can:
   (a) help to survey the distribution of Platypus in the wild;
   (b) distribute questionnaires to the public;
   (c) assist in field studies and behaviour research.

2. Corporations and individuals can help to fund the project or donate equipment. An off-road vehicle is needed to carry researchers and equipment to survey sites; lap-top computers, water quality sensors and similar equipment will also be essential.

A mammal that lays eggs!

The female lays her eggs in a nursery tunnel in a stream bank. The young hatch in 7–10 days.