PLATYPUS WATCH PROJECT

Have you seen a platypus lately?
CSU is gathering information on the platypuses in your area.

Using the web application you can record:
The location of a platypus you have seen directly on an online map.
The platypus status (alive, injured, ulcerated or dead).
Other circumstances surrounding the platypus sighting (e.g. date & time, numbers, breeding activity, burrows).

Community participation is extremely valuable in mapping current platypus distribution and monitoring changes to platypus populations over time.

The information will assist to:
Ensure accurate evaluation of the platypus conservation status.
Be aware of changes in platypus populations over time, e.g. declines, local extinctions.
Plan conservation activities.
Protect platypus populations from threatening processes.

Enter platypus sighting report form & map via the link: https://arcg.is/1PPSbm
PLATYPUS HEALTH STATUS ACROSS AUSTRALIA

- Health status of platypuses in Australia across their range.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mortality Factor</th>
<th>Individuals</th>
<th>Platypus (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unattended illegal nets &amp; traps (drowning)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predation by canids (dog/fox) or raptors (trauma)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man-made structures e.g. pump (drowning)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angling using fishing lines/hooks (drowning)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Litter e.g. string, plastic (entrapment, drowning)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flooding (found immediately after flood)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor vehicles (trauma)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attack by humans (shot or bludgeoned)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drought (found dead near dried up pool)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous (bath tub, digger)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown cause</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number platypuses</strong></td>
<td><strong>174</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fascinating Platypus Facts

Fascinating Platypus Features

• A monotreme (one opening for wastes & reproduction; fur & milk as a mammal, but eggs like birds & reptiles).
• Only found in Australia.
• Secretive and mainly active at dusk & dawn or overnight (crepuscular or nocturnal).
• Solitary (except when breeding or suckling) & territorial (home ranges of up to 7 km).
• Sexually dimorphic (males 40% heavier than females & venom gland connected to a hollow spur).
• Seasonal breeders: mating occurs earlier in the north (Aug-Oct) & later in the south (Oct-Dec).
• Reproduction: 15 - 21 day gestation, ~ 10 day incubation & 3 - 4 month lactation then weaned.
• Sexual maturity at 3 years. Longevity in captivity & in wild < 21 years.
• Feeds in water on invertebrates (caddisfly, mayfly, dragonfly larvae, shrimp, horsehair worms, snails, mussels).
• Nesting & resting burrows in the banks of freshwater streams and lakes of Eastern Australia (see map).
• Size: males 45-63 cm & 1-3 kg; females 39-55 cm & 0.7-1.8 kg. Body temperature about 32°C.
• Many Australians have not seen a platypus in the wild (a water rat could be mistaken for a platypus).

How Abundant & How Healthy Are Our Platypuses?

• There are major knowledge gaps related to its distribution, population sizes & trends, and response to threatening processes.
• Recent documented local declines and extinctions identify that the species is facing considerable threats in some areas.
• Platypus conservation status was upgraded in 2016 by IUCN to “Near Threatened”, while in South Australia it is “Endangered”.

Potential threats to platypus include droughts & floods, habitat loss, pollution, predation (by dogs, eagles, etc.), motor vehicles, litter entrapment and drowning in nets or line.

• The platypus has few serious diseases, except for a deadly fungal infection caused by Mucor amphibiorum seen in Tasmanian platypuses, but not on the mainland to date.

References

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Healthy Platypuses