

## about the project

**The Southern Highlands Platypus Conservation Project aims to gain a better understanding of platypus distribution, habitat, status and threats throughout the Southern Highlands.**



Photo by Klaus cc2.0

There is rising evidence of platypus population declines throughout Australia, however due to the lack of long-term monitoring studies and difficulties in conducting surveys, information on the status of platypus populations is somewhat limited.

The Southern Highlands Platypus Conservation Project aims to improve this situation by establishing a comprehensive, community-based survey and monitoring program, and using the data to assist decision-makers and ensure the Shire has a healthy, thriving platypus population in one hundred years time.

## platypus in the Southern Highlands

The platypus has been recorded in rivers, creeks and dams throughout the Southern Highlands although the few official records we have are somewhat outdated and often limited to rivers and streams close to population centres.

**The most common place to spot platypus in the Southern Highlands is in the Wingecarribee River around Berrima.**

Other local waterways to have recorded platypus sightings include:

- Black Bob's Creek (*Exeter*)
- Burrawang Creek (*Burrawang*)
- Caalong Creek (*Robertson*)
- Cecil Hoskins Nature Reserve (*Moss Vale*)
- Gibbergunyah Creek (*Mittagong*)
- Long Swamp Creek (*Sutton Forest*)
- Medway Rivulet (*Medway*)
- Nattai River (*Mittagong*)
- Nepean River (*East Kangaloon*)
- Paddy's River (*Canyonleigh*)
- Wildes Meadow Creek (*Wildes Meadow*)
- Stonequarry Creek (*Werai*)
- Wollondilly River



Photo by Christine Ferdinand cc4.0

## platypus facts

- The platypus and various species of echidna are the only egg-laying mammals (monotremes) in the world.
- Although mainly nocturnal, it's not uncommon to see a platypus during the day, especially at dusk or dawn.
- The platypus is one of just a few venomous mammals, with males having venomous spurs on their rear legs.
- They are generally solitary animals, typically seeking company for mating purposes only.
- The platypus diet consists mainly of riverbed animals such as insect larvae but they will also eat freshwater shrimp, and adult insects on the surface of the water.
- They will close their eyes and ears while foraging underwater, locating their food using electroreceptors in their bill which sense the small electrical signals produced by the muscular contractions of their prey.
- They prefer to forage in water less than four metres deep, and will spend up to 12 hours a day doing brief, repeated dives searching for food on the river bed.
- Population densities vary, with an upper limit of around 12 platypus per kilometre, a density recorded in the nearby Shoalhaven River where the river is approximately 10m wide, has a series of long pools, and is around 3-4m in depth.
- When they are inactive, they will return to their burrows, which are dug into the river banks, with the entrances typically just above water level.

## threats to platypus

For platypus conservation to succeed, it is important that people realise that platypus populations require healthy creek and river ecosystems to survive, and that individual actions have a real impact, for better or worse, on the survival of platypus populations.

The main threats to platypus include:

- Litter (circular items such as hair ties and rubber bands should be snipped before disposal)
- Irresponsible fishing practises (ie: drowning in yabby nets or hooked on unattended fishing lines)
- Clearing of riparian habitat for urbanisation and agriculture
- Poor water quality caused by urban and agricultural runoff
- Riverbank damage and erosion
- Dams and weirs
- Water extraction
- Predation by introduced predators



*The wound on this platypus's neck was caused by a plastic bracelet (shown below the animal).  
Pic courtesy Australian Platypus Conservancy*

## how can I get involved?

### Report your sightings

To ensure consistency, we encourage all platypus sightings to be reported to the project team by emailing [citizen.science@wsc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:citizen.science@wsc.nsw.gov.au) or calling Council on 4868 0888.

All community sightings are entered into our database and then uploaded to the official wildlife atlas of NSW – BioNet and the Atlas of Living Australia.

### Surveys & waterway assessments

The project team aim to undertake regular platypus survey activities and waterway assessments. If you would like to be involved we would love to hear from you.

### Follow us on Facebook

Our Facebook page has regular updates and interesting information about platypus conservation.

Visit: [facebook.com/SouthernHighlandsPlatypus](https://facebook.com/SouthernHighlandsPlatypus)

### Contact us

To report sightings, get involved in activities, and receive regular updates please contact:

**Email:** [citizen.science@wsc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:citizen.science@wsc.nsw.gov.au)

**Tel:** 4868 0888

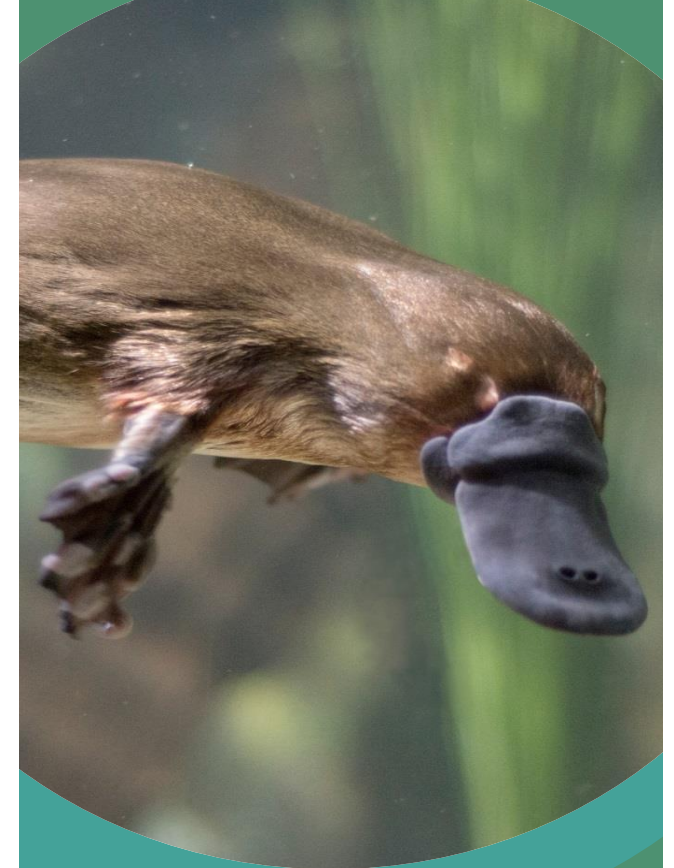
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## SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS PLATYPUS CONSERVATION PROJECT



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