

# ANIMAL OF THE MONTH

## Platypus

(*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*)

### Habitat and distribution

Platypus is endemic to Australia and is dependent on rivers, streams and bodies of freshwater. It is present in eastern Queensland and New South Wales, eastern, central and southwestern Victoria and throughout Tasmania.



### Description

Platypus is a unique semi-aquatic monotreme (egg-laying mammal), featuring a streamlined, ~50 cm body with dense, waterproof dark brown fur. Key features include a sensitive, rubbery, duck-like bill for detecting prey, broad webbed feet for swimming, a beaver-like tail for steering, and venomous spurs on male ankles

### Feeding

- platypus is a unique, egg-laying, venomous mammal.
- They lack teeth, using gravel to grind food, and possess electroreception to hunt blindfolded underwater.
- These semi-aquatic creatures use spurs on their hind legs to deliver venom, and females nurse young without nipples

### IUCN Status:

**Near Threatened** on the IUCN Red List

### Feeding

Platypuses are nocturnal, carnivorous bottom-feeders that consume roughly 15-28% of their body weight daily, mainly foraging for 10-12 hours in fresh water. They use their sensitive, electroreceptive bills to locate aquatic invertebrates, larvae, worms, and crayfish in the sediment, storing food in cheek pouches before grinding it with gravel at the surface

### Threats & Conservation Strategies:

- Platypus populations are declining due to habitat destruction, water regulation (dams), drought, fire, and pollution, with risks exacerbated by climate change.
- Conservation strategies focus on restoring riparian vegetation, restricting harmful yabby traps, improving water quality, and creating, protecting, and relocating populations to secure refuges

**Stephensons Natural History Museum invites you to visit and have a look at preserved animal diversity . You will surely enjoy this visit!**