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NO JOKING MATTER

It is incorrect to call more than one platypus—'platypi'.

- Native to Eastern Australia.
- Duck-like bills.
- Tails act as a rudder.
- Webbed feet.
- Waterproof fur.
- A venomous spur.
- Use electrolocation.
- Dig burrows 3-8 metres long.
- Spend half their day resting.
- Acute eyesight and hearing.
- Close eyes and ears underwater.
- Grow up to 60 centimetres long.

Share projects inspired by *The Wonder Weekly* with us.
Email: UnderwoodCentre.Enquiries@utas.edu.au

SLEEK: A platypus in the Tyenna River, at Mt Field National Park. Pictures: iStock/ Kevin Wells/ Vac1

HAVE you ever seen a platypus in the wild?

Most Tasmanians haven't, even though platypus are quite widespread in Tasmania, and common in lakes and streams around the state.

There are some hot locations for spotting them, some of which are listed right.

They can even be found in the Hobart Rivulet, which flows through and underneath the city.

A local group of citizen scientists recently founded the Hobart Rivulet Platypus community group to keep a watchful eye on these urban natives.

A female platypus, nicknamed Zoom, has formed a special bond with one of the members of the group.

You can find out more about Zoom here: www.abc.net.au/news/2020-12-21/platypus-whisperer-pete-walsh-hobart-rivulet/12986552

Platypus certainly are a curious animal, with their duck-like bills, beaver-like tails and webbed feet.

They almost look like they have been made out of spare parts.

Little wonder British scientists in the late 18th century initially thought strange specimens sent from Australia were a hoax, made of several different animals sewn together.

Platypus, and four species of echidna, are the only monotremes which still exist.

Monotremes are the only mammals that lay eggs rather than giving birth to live

young. There are other features which are also more like a reptile than a mammal, including their lower body temperature.

Remember the recent edition of *The Wonder Weekly* about the eyesight of animals and their use of other senses?

Well platypus close their eyes and ears when they dive under water, and use electrolocation through their bill to find food - crustaceans, worms, molluscs and insect larvae.

Male platypus are not to be messed with, because they have spurs on the inside of their hind legs that can inflict a powerful venom.

If you have seen a platypus in the wild, perhaps you could do a report about this encounter.

This might involve writing about it, doing a drawing or providing a map of the location, or all three.

Or if you live close by a known platypus haunt, perhaps you might ask an adult family member to accompany you on a platypus-spotting bushwalk.

The best time for seeing a platypus is at dawn or dusk.

Of course if you do come across one, watch from a distance and let them go about their business.

They sometimes make a soft growling sound when disturbed: dpipwe.tas.gov.au/Documents/platypus.mp3

Children's University Tasmania members can earn stamps in their passports for this challenge, at the discretion of their school coordinator.

Platypus hot spots

1. Latrobe - Bells Parade or Warrawee Forest Reserve.
2. Waratah - Lake Waratah.
3. Geeveston - Geeveston Circuit Platypus Walk.
4. Strahan - Botanical Creek Platypus Stream.
5. Burnie - Ferndale Reserve.
6. Liffey Falls.
7. Lake St Clair - Platypus Bay.
8. Burnie - Ferndale Reserve.
9. Westerway - Tyenna River.
10. Ulverstone - Leven River.



Word CHANGER

DID YOU KNOW? The spotted-tailed quoll is the largest of the four species of Australian quoll. It can weigh up to 7kg.

Q U O L L

Long, stiff feather _____

Small game bird _____

Of the same size _____

What something is worth _____

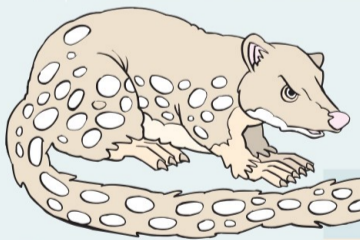
Captive worker _____

To work out the answer to a problem _____

Small burrowing mammals with poor eyesight _____

M O U S E

SOLUTION: QUOLL, quill, quail, equal, value, slave, solve, moles, mouse.



Change one letter and arrange them on the next line to make a new word. Use the clues to help you change a spotted-tailed quoll into a spinifex hopping mouse. The answer is below.

