

# Queensland Platypus Care News No. 2

November 2006



## A Message From the Coordinator

Welcome back to PlatypusCare News. This newsletter is being sent to the growing list of people who have contributed in some way to our *Queensland PlatypusCare* project over the past 24 months. If anybody has suggestions for others who should receive this newsletter, please let us know.

We have been very busy with our platypus projects since the last platypus newsletter, having been involved with 8 platypus surveys since that time. We have also continued to continue our work of collating platypus records from the public, spreading awareness of platypus related issues, and providing information on platypus distribution to environmental advocacy groups. The platypus is a fantastic species for engaging the community in events outside of their normal range of activities. Some lucky people even get to spot a platypus during our activities!

This edition of the newsletter is packed with information that we hope you will find of interest. In the pages that follow, you will find summaries of our platypus sightings data for central and far north Queensland, and a list of upcoming events.

Again, we would like to thank those without whose financial and physical support this project would not have been possible. In addition to those who gave us money and who provided institutional platypus records (see the back page for a full listing), we'd like to thank all those who have submitted records. A special thanks is due to members of Gold Coast and hinterland Environment Council, Moggill Creek Catchment group and Save Our Waterways Now (Enoggera Creek), SEQC and also Cici Legoe, who has done such a wonderful job entering and validating our platypus sightings database.

Until next time,  
**Scott Burnett** and the team at Wildlife Queensland



## About Platypus Care

*What is it?*

*PlatypusCare* was established by the Australian Platypus Conservancy in 2002. Wildlife Queensland became a collaborator in 2004, when we started the *Queensland PlatypusCare* project. Our main objectives are to raise public awareness about the platypus and its habitat and to collect reliable data on the distribution and abundance of the platypus in Queensland.

*What happens to the information that we collect?*

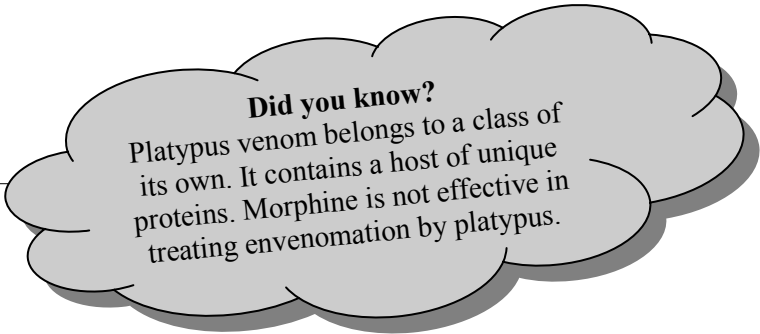
One of the main aims of our project is to be able to provide information on platypus distribution to planning authorities, at the local and state

government levels, in the hope of better land and catchment management for platypus. As such, all platypus sighting information that we receive is collated into a single database and disseminated to the relevant local council, and to the EPA. We can also use the information ourselves to lobby for protection of important platypus habitats.

We respect the privacy of those who send us their platypus sightings, so while we keep a record of people's names and contact numbers for data management purposes, these aren't passed on to any third parties.

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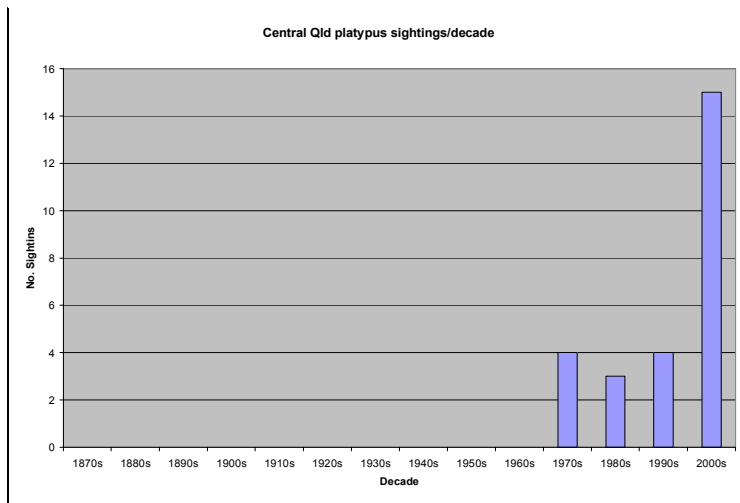
## Regional Round-Up

### CENTRAL QUEENSLAND

The *Platypus Care* database has only 36 records from the Central Queensland region, which is bounded by Rockhampton in the south and Townsville in the north. Nearly half of these records (16) have been collected directly from the public during this project. The remainder of the come from other databases held by EPA and the Queensland Museum.

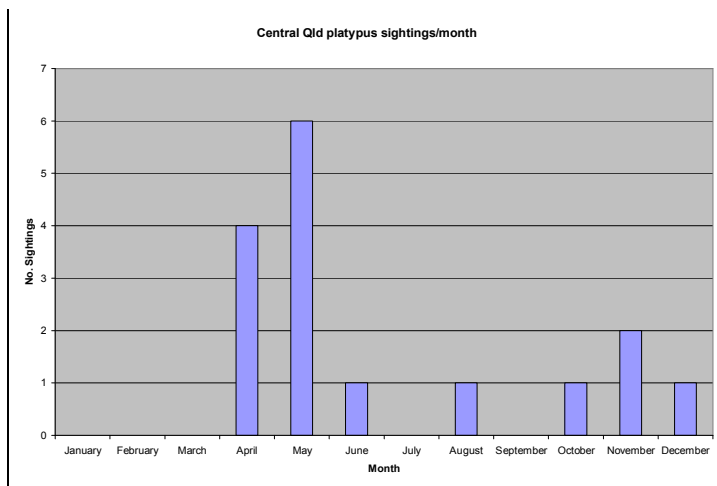
All of the 36 records had sufficient information to plot them on a map. These records covered 11 different waterways in this region where platypus have been sighted:

Broken River	21
East Funnel Creek	2
Finch Hutton Gorge	1
Lotus Creek	1
Pioneer River	3
Suttor Creek	1
Urannah Creek	2
West Funnel Creek	2
Unnamed	3
(three different creeks)	

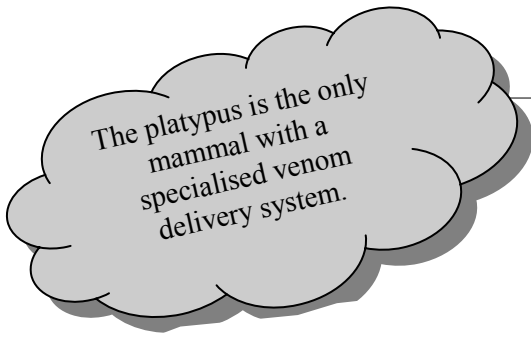


There were 26 records that had the year of the sighting recorded. The earliest record was 1970.

Once again the majority of the records (73%) were from the 1990's and 2000's (4 and 15 respectively). There were a total of 4 records from the 1970's and 3 from the 1980's. It is unfortunate that there are no early records from this region. Once again there is significant bias towards the recent decades in the records received.



16 records included the month of the sighting. Due to the limited number of records it is difficult to draw any conclusions on seasonal trends. However it represents an important base upon which to build. The most records so far come from the month of May (6).



*WET TROPICS SUMMARY*

The *Platypus Care* database now has 130 records from the wet tropics (i.e. Cooktown to Townsville) region. 32 of these records have been collected directly from the public, 8 in the last 12 months. The remainder of the records has come from databases of the EPA and the Queensland Museum.

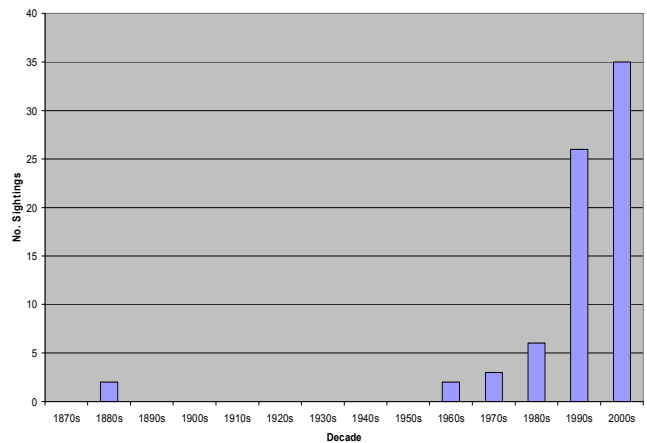
127 of the records came with enough information for them to be plotted accurately on a map. From these records there were 60 waterways identified in which platypus have been sighted:

See a complete list of these on page 4.

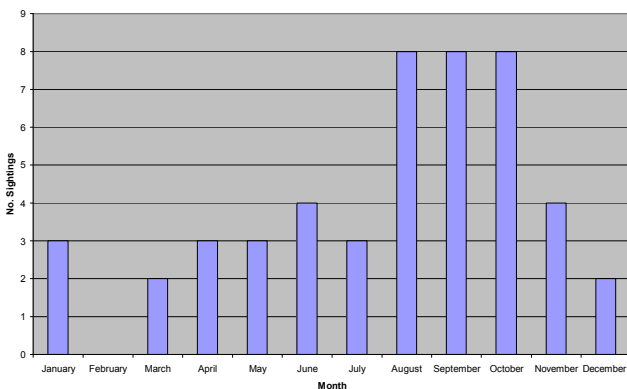
48 records in which the month was recorded came from every month of the year except February. The months which had the highest number of sightings were August, September and October.

There were 75 records from the wet tropics region that came with information on the year they were sighted. As for the whole of Queensland the vast majority (82%) came from the 1990's and 2000's (26 and 35 respectively). There were no records between the 1890s and the 1950s. 2 records came from the 1880's and the 1960's, 4 from the 1970's and 6 from the 1980's. This probably reflects bias in people's reporting rather than a real fluctuation in platypus numbers.

Wet Tropics platypus sightings/decade



Wet Tropics platypus sightings/month



Platypus sightings records from the Wet Tropics area show a bias towards more recent decades. This is a recurring pattern in all of our survey areas, and most likely reflects a trend towards people remembering or placing greater importance upon more recent sightings than older ones. Remember, we want all your sightings, in some cases the older sightings are more interesting than recent ones as they can tell us a lot about how platypus numbers and distribution have changed, or not. Another interesting trend from these data are the relatively larger number of sightings during the l. Winter – Spring period, which is probably when platypus are breeding. Platypus records from the wet tropics area are almost invariably from stretches of waterway where there aren't crocodiles; the footslopes and higher areas of the coastal ranges and tablelands.

## Wet Tropics Summary

*continued*

Identified Waterways from page 3

Alice River	1
Annan River	1
Babina Creek	2
Barron River	4
Behanna Creek	1
Bettes Swamp	1
Birthday Creek	2
Blunder Creek	7
Burdekin River	2
Bushy Creek	2
Bussy Creek	2
Clohesy River	1
Davies Creek	4
Gillies Creek	2
Granite Normanby River	1
Hasties Swamp	3
Henrietta Creek	1
Herbert River	1
Hypipame Crater	2
Imrie Creek	3
Jum Rum	1
Kearneys Creek	1
Kirama	2
Lake Barrine	1
Lake Eacham	1
Little Millstream River	1
Little Mulgrave	2
Mena Creek	3
Millstream Creek	3
Mossman River	5
Nissen Creek	1
North Johnstone River	6
O'keefe Creek	1
Peterson Creek	3
Piebald Creek	3
Priors Creek	6
Rankin Creek	2
Rifle Creek	6

Ross River	1
Spencer Creek	3
Star River	1
Stewart Creek	2
Stony Creek	3
Tinaroo Dam	4
Tully River	1
Wallaby Creek	2
Wallaman Falls	1
Walsh River	4
West Spencer Creek	1
Whyanbeel Creek	2
Woopan Creek	1
Yaminie Creek	1
Unnamed	8
(8 different creeks)	

We know the years in which 98 of the 142 platypus sightings were made. The majority (34 and 39 respectively) were recorded in the 1990's and the 2000's. Otherwise, there is a single sighting from the 1920's, and 1960's, two for the 1970's and 21 from the 1980's. As discussed in the Pine Rivers summary, this probably does not indicate that city platypus numbers have increased, more likely it reflects a bias in people's reporting habits.



## ONGOING AND FUTURE PROJECTS

### Upper Brisbane River

We are running a series of public presentations and a platypus survey in the upper Brisbane River Catchment thanks to support from south-east Queensland Catchments NRM Inc (see calendar below). Most of these will already have been run by the time you receive this, however we'll be reporting on the outcome of these activities in a future publication.

### Brisbane City platypus surveys

We are negotiating funding with Brisbane City Council which will enable us to continue our community and field survey work within the council area. Emphasis will be on delivering more platypus discovery talks, setting up another platypus community survey group and supporting the Moggill and Enogerra Creeks groups who have kept the platypus surveys going under their own steam. This work will occur in the first half of 2007.



## PLATYPUS ACTIVITIES CALENDAR

If you'd like to be involved in any of the activities below, please contact the relevant person on the numbers shown.

<i>When</i>	<i>What</i>	<i>Where</i>	<i>Contact</i>
7 November 2006 Tuesday	Platypus discovery presentation	Stockyard Creek area	Glenn 0439 724270
9 November 2006 Thursday	Platypus survey training and survey	Fernvale area	Glenn 0439 724270
13 November 2006 Monday	Platypus discovery presentation	Woodford	Glenn 0439 724270
17 Nov Friday & 18 November Saturday	Pre-survey briefing on Friday & field survey on Saturday	Fernvale	Glenn 0439 724270
22 November 2006 Wednesday	Platypus discovery presentation	Cooyar Creek catchment and Yarraman area	Glenn 0439 724270
25 November Saturday	Platypus survey	Currumbin Creek	Linda Ray 5534 1412
2 December Saturday	Platypus survey	Tallebudgera Creek	Linda Ray 5534 1412
22 April 2007	Moggill Creek Platypus Festival which incorporates a survey	Brookfield	Greg Siepen 0408 774631
tba	Platypus discovery presentation	Fernvale area	Glenn 0439 724270
tba	Platypus discovery presentation	Upper Stanley River catchment	Glenn 0439 724270

**Note:** dates may change at short notice depending on weather and other unforeseen circumstances so you must register, with contact details, for any surveys in which you wish to participate.

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**Please keep those platypus sightings coming in, no matter where you are or how old they are!**

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## ABOUT WPSQ

The Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland (*Wildlife Queensland* or WPSQ) is a community environmental group with a wonderfully diverse membership drawn together by a common interest in wildlife. *Wildlife Queensland* started in 1962 when poet Judith Wright, naturalist David Fleay, artist Kathleen MacArthur and publisher Brian Clouston decided to act on their concerns about Australia's precious and vanishing natural environment. The Great Barrier Reef, threatened by mining at the time, drew much of their attention, but the Society they founded protects all Australian wildlife, through education, consultation and legislation.

The first meetings were in Brisbane, and as the Society respects the importance of local knowledge and local action, branches were quickly established throughout Queensland.

During the year we hold events, such as special presentations, workshops, Batty Boat Cruises and wildlife conferences.

### *Want to get involved?*

**The Queensland *PlatypusCare* project depends on the input of community platypus sightings. You can contact us at 07 3221 0194 or at [platypus@wildlife.org.au](mailto:platypus@wildlife.org.au)**



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## Acknowledgements

Special thanks go to the groups who have freely provided their platypus sightings data to us and/or have taken part in platypus surveys including: the Moggill Creek Catchment Group, Save Our Waterways Now (SOWN), Faunawatch, Noosa District Landcare Group, Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee, Queensland Museum, Queensland EPA, Brisbane City Council, Gold Coast City Council, Pine Rivers Shire Council, Australian Platypus Conservancy, and Pine Rivers and Sunshine Coast Branches of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland. Steve Parish kindly donated images and the SEQ NRM body provided GIS facilities.



Dedicated to a better Brisbane



Australian Platypus Conservancy

