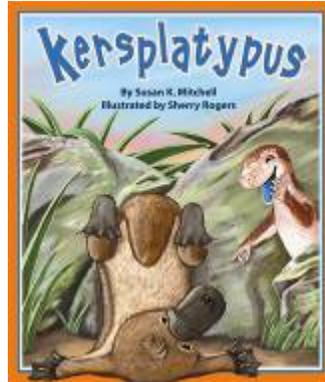


Teaching Activities

for



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Teaching Activities are intended for use at home, in the classroom, and during story-times.

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Questions to ask children before reading the book

- What do you think the book is about by looking at the cover? (or one or two of the inside illustrations) *Sometimes it is easy to tell from the cover, other times it is not.*
- What does the cover illustration show?
- What are the two animals shown on the cover?
- Why is the skink laughing at the platypus?

What do children already know?

- Young children are naturally inquisitive and are sponges for information. The whole purpose of this activity is to help children verify the information they know (or think they know) and to get them thinking “beyond the box” about a particular subject.
- The children should write down their “concepts” (or adults for them if the children are not yet writing) on the provided chart found on the next page.
- Use the questions to get children thinking about what they already know. Feel free to add more questions or thoughts according to the child(ren) involved.

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What do children already know—activity chart

Ask children to write down what they think they know before reading the book. If the information is verified while reading the book, check “yes.” If the information is wrong, mark “no” and cross it off. Write the correct information in another section, below. Make a note of how you verify the information.

<u>What do I think I know?</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Verified</u>
What are some animals that live only in Australia?			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other
What is special about some of the Australian animals like kangaroos or wallabys?			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other
Why would an animal have webbed feet?			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other
How would claws help animals?			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other
What is a mammal?			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other
Most mammals are born alive. Are any mammals hatched from eggs? (Yes or no)			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other

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Use this chart for any other thoughts the children might have.

<u>What do I think I know?</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Verified</u>
			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other

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After reading the book – writing prompts & thinking it through

- Did the cover “tell” you what the book was about?
- If not, how does the illustration on the front relate to the story?
- Draw your own cover
- Can you think of another title for the book?
- Do you think everything in the story could be true? *Do animals really talk to each other or have human traits?*
- If the author used talking animal or gave the animals human traits, could the story have been told differently? How?
- Write a different ending to the story

Re-read the book looking for more information

Go back and re-read the book studying each page carefully.

- What, if any, facts are mentioned about the animals’ adaptations in the text?
- What can be seen or inferred from the illustrations that is not or are not mentioned in the text?
- What, if anything, can be inferred from the text?
- Pause during second readings and ask the child(ren) if they remember what happens next.
- What would happen if a character did something different or if something different happened to the character? Would it/could it change the story?

Comprehension Questions

- What made the platypus leave his burrow?
- Why did Brushtail Possum think the platypus might belong in a tree?
- Why did Kookaburra think the platypus could fly?
- Why did Wallaby think the platypus belonged on the ground?
- Who decided that the platypus should be called “kersplatypus” and why?
- What happened when platypus got in the water?
- Who did he see?
- What happened to the skink when he tried to climb the tree to watch the platypus?

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What do children already know—activity conclusion

- Do the children have any more questions about Australian animals? If so, write them down on the chart.
- Identify whether the information was verified and how.
- If the concept is correct, make a note of how the information was confirmed (illustration, in text, in fun fact notes)
- If the concept was not correct, what IS the correct information – with above confirmation notes as above.
- If the concept was neither confirmed nor denied, look the information up in a reliable source and note where it was confirmed.
- Wrap it all up by adding notes with new information that they learned either through the reading or the research while looking up something else.

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Language Arts

Developing a vocabulary “word wall”

If using the book as a way to introduce a topic or subject, this is also a great way to introduce subject-related vocabulary words. If you don't have the time (or the inclination) to develop the word wall by playing the Vocabulary Game (below), we have provided a vocabulary list for you.

Vocabulary words for the “word wall” may be written on index cards, on a poster board, or on a chalk board. If writing on poster board or chalk board, you might want to sort into noun, verbs, etc. right away to save a step later. Leaving the words posted (even on a refrigerator at home) allows the children to see and think about them frequently.

Vocabulary game

This activity is designed to get children thinking of vocabulary words which will then be used as the beginning vocabulary list for a science lesson.

Select an illustration and give children a specific length of time (five minutes?) to write down all the words the children can think of about the particular subject. *If you do not have classroom sets of the book, it is helpful to project an illustration on a white board. Check Web site (www.ArbordalePublishing.com) for book “previews” that may be used for this purpose.*

Their word list should include anything and everything that comes to mind, including nouns, verbs and adjectives. At the end of the time period, have each child take turns reading a word from his/her list. If anyone else has the word, they do nothing. If however, they are the only one with the word, they should circle it. While reading the list, one person should write the word on a flashcard or large index card and post it on a bulletin board or wall.

At the end, the child with the most words circled “wins.” And you have a start to your science vocabulary list. *Note if children use an incorrect word, this is a good time to explain the proper word or the proper usage.*

Putting it all together

The following activities may be done all together or over a period of several days.

- Continue to add words to the vocabulary list as children think of them.
- Sort vocabulary words into nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc. and write what it is on the back of the card. When the cards are turned over, all you will see is “noun,” etc. *(These can then be used to create silly sentences, below)*
- Now sort the vocabulary words into more specific categories. For example, nouns can be divided into plants, animals, rocks, minerals, etc. They can be divided into living/non-living, or into habitat-related words.
- Have children create sentences using their vocabulary words. Each sentence could be written on a separate slip of paper.
- Have children (individually or in small groups) sort and put sentences into informative paragraphs or a story.
- Edit and re-write paragraphs into one informative paper or a story.

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Suggested vocabulary list

<u>Nouns</u>	<u>verbs</u>	<u>adjectives</u>
air	balance	Australian
Australia	bounced	back
billabong	climb	cold
birds	cry	damp
blue-tongued skink	dive	dry
body	flap	flat
brushtail possum	grab	front
burrow	hatch	furry
claws	jump	long
ears	laugh	scoopy
egg	lay	tiny
eyes	scamper	underground
feathers	steer	underwater
feet	stretch	warm
fur	swim	webbed
kookaburra	tease	
lakes	waddle	
mammal		
marsupials		
platypus		
pouch		
rain		
reptile		
rivers		
tail		
wallaby		
water		

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Kersplatypus

Silly sentence structure activity

This is a fun activity that develops both an understanding of sentence structure and the science subject. Use words from the “word wall” to fill in the blanks. After completing silly sentences for fun, have children try to fill in the proper words by looking for the information in the book.

A _____ is a _____ that _____es from
eggs.
noun noun verb

It has _____ front feet that _____ to make
“paddles” to help it swim. _____s help it to move
while on land.
noun verb noun

Its thick _____ keeps it _____ and _____,
even in cold water.
Noun adjective adjective

Its _____ is long and _____ to help steer
through cold water.
Noun adjective

It closes its _____ and _____ when it dives
for food.

If necessary, it can stay _____ for up to ten minutes
to hide from predators.
adjective

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Kersplatypus

Sequence sentence strips

Preparation: Cut into sentence strips, laminate if desired, and place in a "center." Have children put the events in order. Children may work alone or in small groups. Cards are in order but should be mixed up when cut apart.

----- ✂ -----

The creature did not belong there. Outback animals gathered around the tiny, damp thing in the grass.

----- ✂ -----

Brushtail Possum looked at the claws and decided the creature must belong in a tree.

----- ✂ -----

**The creature tried to climb the tree. KERSPLAT!
He fell flat!**

----- ✂ -----

Kookaburra decided it must belong in the air.

----- ✂ -----

----- ✂ -----
The creature tried to fly. KERSPLAT! He fell flat!

----- ✂ -----
Wallaby decided the creature must belong on the ground.

----- ✂ -----
The little creature tried to jump like the Wallaby. KERSPLAT! He fell flat!

----- ✂ -----
Old Bandicoot said he thought the creature might be a platypus.

----- ✂ -----
Little Skink laughed and said the creature wasn't a platypus but a Kersplatypus!

----- ✂ -----

The platypus dove into the water and dipped and dove, feeling right at home.

----- ✂ -----

He saw something swimming his way that looked familiar...it was his mother!

----- ✂ -----

The platypus knew where he belonged.

----- ✂ -----

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Kersplatypus

Word search

Find the hidden words. Even non-reading children can try to match letters to letters to find the words! Easy – words go up to down or left to right.

For older children, identify the coordinates of the first letter in each word (number, letter).

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1	A	L	L	P	W	E	B	B	E	D
2	T	W	E	O	F	I	B	U	C	O
3	M	A	R	S	U	P	I	A	L	Y
4	A	L	T	S	R	L	R	R	A	S
5	R	L	A	U	O	A	D	M	W	E
6	S	A	I	M	I	T	U	M	S	O
7	U	B	L	U	E	Y	N	I	U	N
8	P	Y	U	N	D	P	K	L	N	E
9	I	E	N	O	D	U	C	K	I	N
10	A	S	G	O	T	S	K	I	N	K
11	L	F	E	A	T	H	E	R	S	W

Use capital letters

___, ___ PLATYPUS
___, ___ WALLABY
___, ___ WEBBED
___, ___ FEATHERS
___, ___ MILK

___, ___ SKINK
___, ___ POSSUM
___, ___ MARSUPIAL
___, ___ TAIL
___, ___ LUNG

___, ___ FUR
___, ___ CLAWS
___, ___ DUCK
___, ___ BLUE
___, ___ BIRD

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Kerplatypus

Word Search

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K O O K A B U R R A
 W B A N D I C O O T
 A O K E R L T U H P
 L U W A L L A B Y L
 K T T L K A R L P A
 A B A N D B K Y O T
 B A S S U O D T S Y
 O C S K I N K C S P
 U K A E B G L A U U
 T K E S P L A T M S

Find these hidden words:

platypus
 skink
 possum
 kookaburra
 wallaby
 bandicoot
 outback
 billabong
 walkabout
 kersplat



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Kersplatypus

Crossword Puzzle

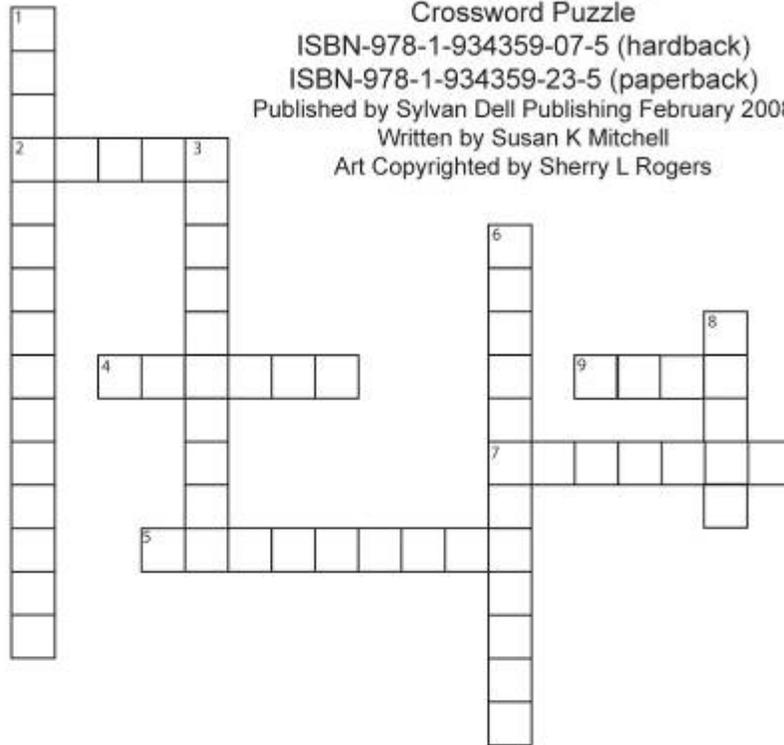
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Down

- 1) Who is the first animal to try to help the little platypus find where he belongs?
- 3) What kind of bird tries to help the little platypus?
- 6) Skink said "He can't climb. He can't fly. He can't hop. So far, all he's good for is falling flat. He's not a platypus. . . he's a _____!"
- 8) Little platypus stuck a webbed foot in the _____, and before you could say "Waltzing Mathilda," he jumped right in.

Down	Across
1) Skink	1) Skink
3) Kangaroo	2) Kangaroo
6) Kangaroo	3) Kangaroo
8) Kangaroo	4) Kangaroo
	5) Kangaroo
	6) Kangaroo
	7) Kangaroo
	8) Kangaroo
	9) Kangaroo

Across

- 2) Who said "You are the craziest thing I have ever seen?"
- 4) The little creature waddled as fast as he could to the end of the rock, flapped his _____ feet and. . .
- 5) Old _____ was digging for food when he saw all the commotion and tried to help.
- 7) All the animals tried hard to help the little platypus find where he belonged. But skink didn't. He simply _____.
- 9) While swimming little platypus saw something that looked just like he did. It was his _____.

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Science

What's in a name?

Blue-tongue skink or blue-tongue lizard?

Depending on where in the world you live, you might call this same animal either a skink or a lizard. A skink is a type of lizard. In the US, we call these animals, blue-tongue skinks but in Australia, they are called blue-tongue lizards.

Suppose you are a scientist, how do you know if you are talking about the same animal? Scientists use the scientific classification name for animals. These names are based on Latin and are used to refer to the same animal—no matter where it is in the world the scientist lives or what language the scientist speaks.

Lizards:

Kingdom:	Animal	
Phylum:	Chordata	
Class:	Reptile	
Order:	Squamata	
Suborder:	Lacertilia	
Families:		
	Iguania	Iguanas and relatives
	Gekkota	geckos and snake-lizards
	Scincomorpha	skinks and relatives
	Anguimorpha	anguimorph lizards (Gila monsters, komodos)
Genus		
Species		

Usually animals are called by their Genus and species. There are six species of blue-tongued lizards or skinks in Australia:

- Common or Eastern Blue-tongue Lizard (*Tiliqua scincoides scincoides*)
- Northern Blue-tongued Skink (*Tiliqua scincoides intermedia*)
- Western blue-tongued skink (*Tiliqua occipitalis*)
- Central blue-tongued skink (*Tiliqua multifasciata*)
- Blotched Blue-tongue (*Tiliqua nigrolutea*)
- Shingleback (*Tiliqua rugosa*)

What do you notice about the Genus of all the skinks found in Australia?

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Edible sorting and classifying activity

Gather together a cup of edible “sorting items.” For example:

- As many different kinds of M&Ms as you can find
- Chocolate & peanut butter chips
- Hershey kisses
- Peanuts or other type of nuts



Ask the child to sort the items into groups. There is no right and wrong, only what makes sense to the child. When finished, ask the child:

What criteria or attribute (color, size, ingredient, etc.) did you use to sort the items?

- Are there some items that fit more than one group or don't fit any group?
- Is it easy to sort or were there some items that were a little confusing?

If more than one person did this, did everyone sort by the same criteria? To really extend the learning, graph the attributes used to sort the items. *(blank graph below)*

Sorting by attribute graph

Graph the attributes that children used to sort their items.

What was the most common attribute (size, shape, color, etc.) used?

10					
9					
8					
7					
6					
5					
4					
3					
2					
1					
Attribute:					

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Classifying animals

Animals can be sorted too. What are some attributes you might use to sort animals?

- By habitat
- Does it have a backbone?
- Does it have arms or legs? If so, how many?
- Do they have stripes or patterns on their bodies?
- Do they walk, swim, jump, or fly?

Some things are very easy for scientists to sort or classify, other things are not so easy. The first question they will ask is whether the item is (or was) alive or not. Both plants and animals are living things.

If the item in question is an animal, like the animals in the story, scientists will then ask other questions:

- Does it have hair or fur, feathers, or dry skin or scales?
- Does it breathe oxygen from air (lungs) or water (gills)?
- Are the babies born alive or from eggs?
- Does the baby eat milk from its mother?
- Is it warm or cold-blooded?
- How many body parts does the animal have?

By answering these (and other) questions, scientists can sort or classify the animals into “classes” such as mammal, bird, reptile, fish, amphibian, or insect.

Animal classification chart at class level (vertebrates)

Information on the five classes of **vertebrates** (animals with backbones) is given in the table below. Using information found in the book or below, fill in the blanks for each of the animals mentioned in the book (text and the *For Creative Minds* section). Some of the information may be determined by looking at the illustrations. For example, if the animal breathes water, it will be shown living in the water. If the information is not in the book, it has already been filled in.

Have the children use the chart to determine to which class of animals each animal belongs (mammal, bird, fish, or reptile). The chart may also be used to complete a Venn diagram.

	Breathes oxygen from air or water	Warm or cold-blooded	Lays eggs or live birth	Hair, scales, or feathers
Mammals	Air	Warm	Mostly live	Hair
Birds	Air	Warm	Eggs	Feathers
Fish	Water	Cold	Varies	Scales
Reptiles	Air	Cold	Mostly eggs	Scales
Amphibians	Water, then air	Cold	Eggs in water to larva	Moist skin that is naked & smooth
Platypus		Warm	Eggs	
Skink		Cold	Eggs	
Kookaburra		Warm	Eggs	

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Activity or sorting cards

Wallaby

Kingdom: Animal
Phylum: Chordata
Class: Mammal
Subclass: Marsupial



Blue-tongued skink

Kingdom: Animal
Phylum: Chordata
Class: Reptile



Platypus

Kingdom: Animal
Phylum: Chordata
Class: Mammal
Subclass: Monotreme



Bandicoot

Kingdom: Animal
Phylum: Chordata
Class: Mammal
Subclass: Marsupial



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Brush-tail Possum

Kingdom: Animal
Phylum: Chordata
Class: Mammal
Subclass: Marsupial



Kookaburra

Kingdom: Animal
Phylum: Chordata
Class: Bird



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Animal card games

Memory Card Game Make two copies of each of the sorting card pages and cut out the cards. Mix them up and place them face down on a table. Taking turns, each player should turn over two cards so that everyone can see. If the cards match, he or she keeps the pair and takes another turn. If they do not match, the player should turn the cards back over and it is another player's turn. The player with the most pairs at the end of the game wins.

Who Am I? Copy or download the cards. Poke a hole through the card and tie onto a piece of yarn. Each child should put on a "card necklace" so that the card is on their back. Each child should ask "yes/no" questions to guess what animal they are.

A day in the life of . . .

- Pick an animal from the book and pretend that you are that animal.
- Explain where you live (habitat).
- What do you eat?
- What animals might eat you?
- How do you protect yourself from those animals?
- Where do you sleep or rest?
- Write a paragraph about what do you do during the day (or night if nocturnal).

Life Cycles

Pick an animal from the book and research the life cycle of that animal.

- What are the babies called?
- How are the animals born? (hatched from eggs, born alive, etc.)
- How many brothers and sisters might be born at the same time?
- How big is the baby (length, height, weight, etc.) when born?
- What is the "house" like if applicable (nest, den, burrow)?
- Where is it found (underground, in trees, etc)?
- Which parent(s), if any, are involved in raising the young?
- What does the baby eat and for how long?
- How long will the babies stay with the parent (if parents are involved)?
- When is the "baby" considered an adult?
- How will it find a mate and have babies?
- Who prepares the nest/den and how (if applicable)?
- Some animals are only born at specific times of the year (to coincide with food availability). Is the animal born any time or just during special times of the year?

Adaptations

Adaptations help animals to live in their habitat: to get food and water, to protect themselves from predators, to survive weather, and even to help them make their homes.

- Physical Adaptations include body shape. (teeth, feet, body covering, hair, blubber, ability to move, climb, etc.)
- Camouflage: color of skin or pattern to blend into background.
- Mimicry: Pretending to be something else to fool predators (Katydid)
- Behavior: opossum plays dead, social groups
- Migration: the seasonal movement of animals from one location to another
- Hibernation: a long, deep sleep in which the animals breathing and heartbeat are lower than usual.

Pick an animal from the book and try to figure out some of the animal's adaptations.

- How does it move and what parts of its body does it use to move?
- How does it see?
- How does it hear?
- How does it get its food?
- What parts of its body does it use to gather the food?
- How does it eat its food?
- What parts of the body does it use to eat the food? (teeth are different for carnivores than herbivores...)
- How does it hide from predators or prey (so it can catch the prey)?
- How does it protect itself from predators?
- In what habitat does it live?
- What adaptations does the animal need to help it survive in that habitat? (heat, cold, land, water, underground, high altitude, et.)
- Where does the animal live and does it make a "house?"
- Does it live alone or with a group?
- How does it "communicate" with others of its kind?
- How does it sleep?
- When does it sleep?
- Is food readily available all year?
- How does the animal deal with seasonal changes (if applicable)?

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Science journal

Have children draw a picture to define the vocabulary word or concept

Mammal

Marsupial

Monotreme

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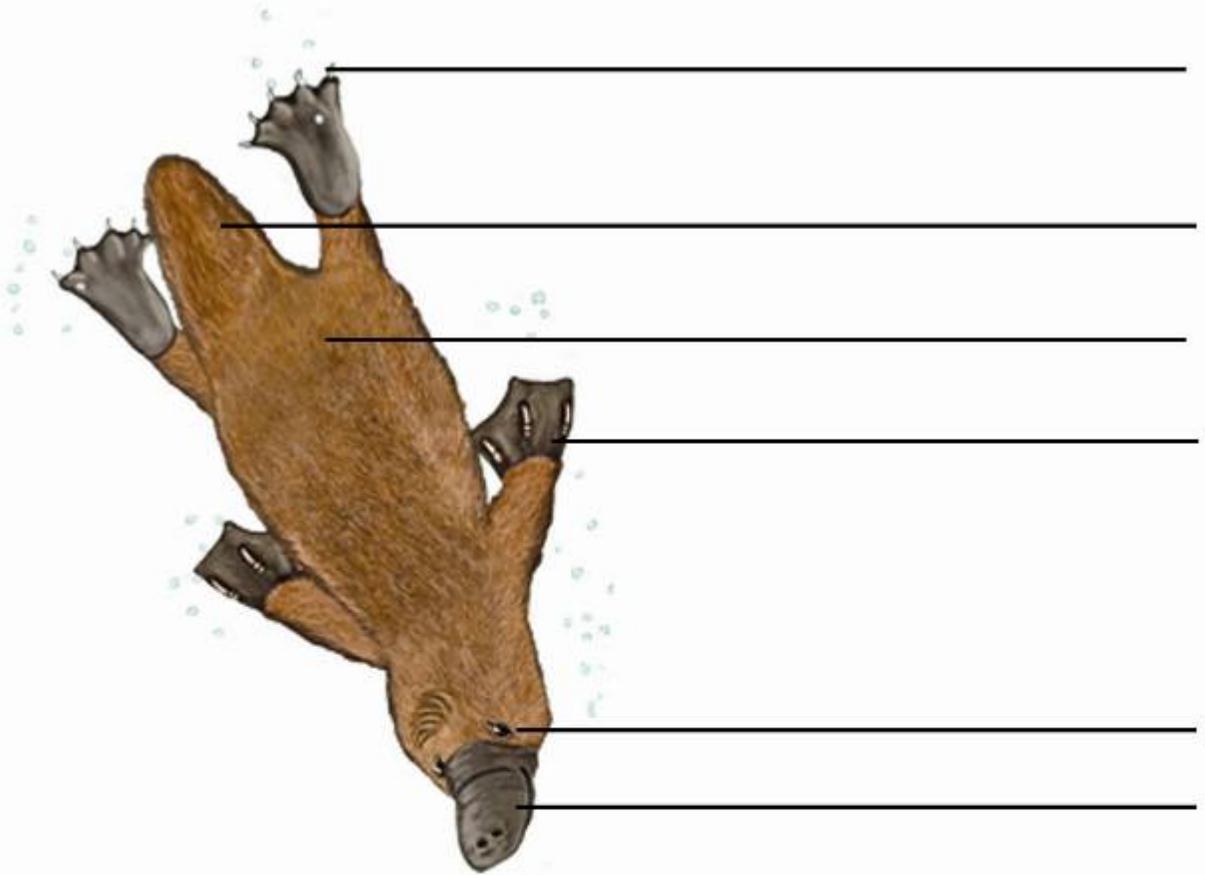
Webbed feet

Thick, heavy fur

Duck-like bill with sensors

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Label the Platypus Body Parts & Adaptations



Word Bank:

Eyes close when underwater.

Thick, heavy fur helps to keep it warm even in cold water.

Long, flat tail used to steer through the water.

Claws on feet help move on land.

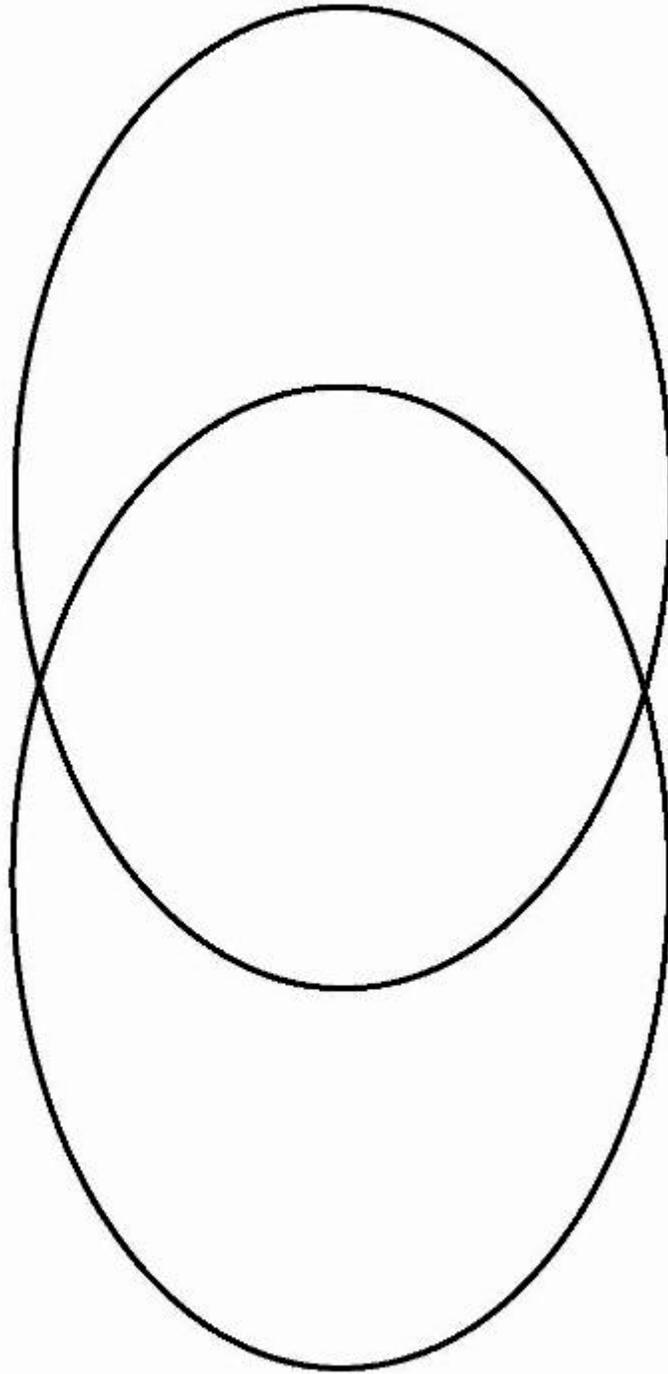
Webbed feet are like paddles for swimming.

Duck-like bill is a nose and a mouth.

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Two Animal Comparison

Pick any two animals and compare and contrast them.



Common

Math

Measuring (comparing and contrasting)

Animals come in all shapes and sizes. Some animals are so small, they can only be seen with a microscope. Other animals are so big that they are the size of a school bus when they are born!

In general, a male platypus is larger than a female. An adult platypus measures between 12 and 18 inches and weighs between two and five pounds.

But what does that really mean? What standard measuring tool would you use to measure something in:

- Inches
- Pounds

Try to imagine how big or small the animal is compared to something you know or what are some other things about the same size?

- How big is a pet cat?
- How big is a pet dog?
- Which one might be about the size of a platypus?
- What are some items that are 12 or 18 inches long?
- How tall is the book? How wide is it when it is open? How does that compare to a platypus?

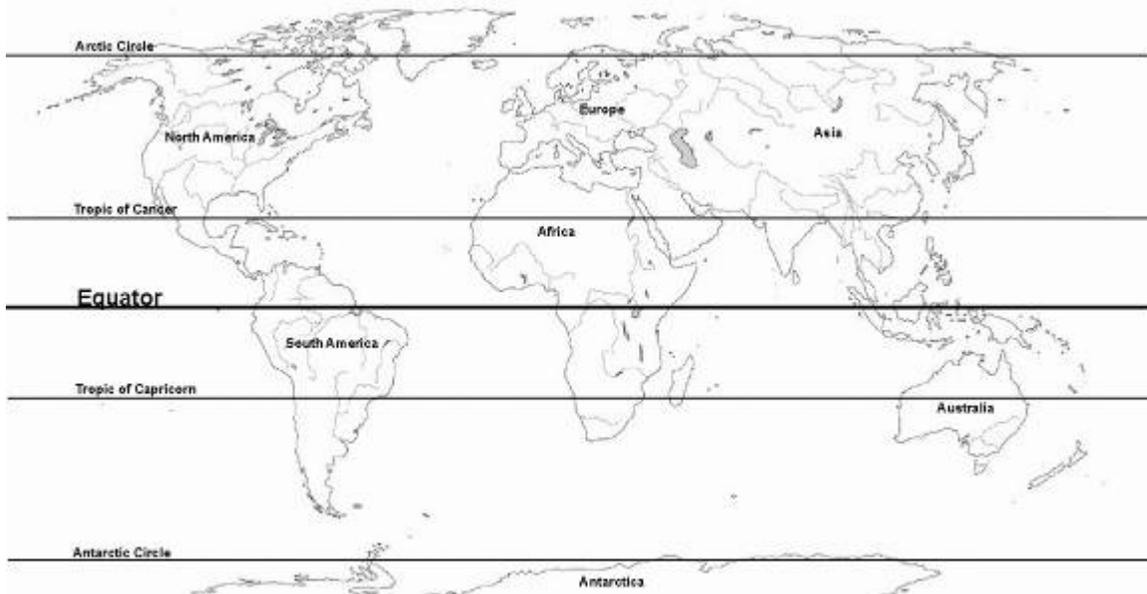
Suppose it weighs five pounds:

- Guess what other things weigh about five pounds (how many books, a bag of flour or sugar, etc.)
- Weigh the items to see; were you right?
- Which items weigh more, less, or equal to five pounds?

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Research and geography

Find the continent of Australia on the map below:



Now look at the map from LearnAnimals.com below that shows where you could find wild platypuses in Australia. Can you show where that would be on the world map above? Where do you live? Do you live close to or far away from Australia?



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Character

Caring about others/Citizenship

In this story, the skink teases and makes fun of the baby platypus; the skink bullies the platypus. A bully is someone who is mean or hurts other people either physically or verbally. Sometimes the bully acts this way to get something or to feel important. Usually bullies feel poorly about themselves and they act out their angry feelings on others. Children who are being bullied often need the help and support of their friends, just as the platypus does in this story. Here are some ideas to help you deal with a bully:

- Try to avoid the situation or place where you are being bullied, or try to avoid being alone.
- Don't show anger or fear; that is exactly what the bully wants. Keep a neutral expression or try to laugh or make a joke if you can.
- Ask the person to leave you alone and then walk away. Don't fight back.
- Talk about the problem with your best friends. Maybe they have some ideas for you. For example, a friend might tell you that the kid who annoys you also mistreats other people. Or your friend might tell you how he or she handles the bully.
- It is very important that you talk to your mother, father, teacher, principal, or the school's counselor about the problem, especially if someone in your class frequently hurts your feelings, threatens you, or physically attacks you. Nobody deserves to be treated badly by others. It is not tattling to talk to an adult about a bully.
- Consider taking a class in self-defense. There are many classes for young people in karate, judo, or other martial arts. Such training can give you self-confidence and teach you how to block blows and frustrate attackers.
- A group of kids may help you to stand up against bullies and to find a way to prevent bullies from hurting anyone else.
- Remember that one person's insults or punches do not make *you* a bad person. Think about your friends and family members who like and care about you. If you are being bullied by someone don't be afraid to tell others about it.

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