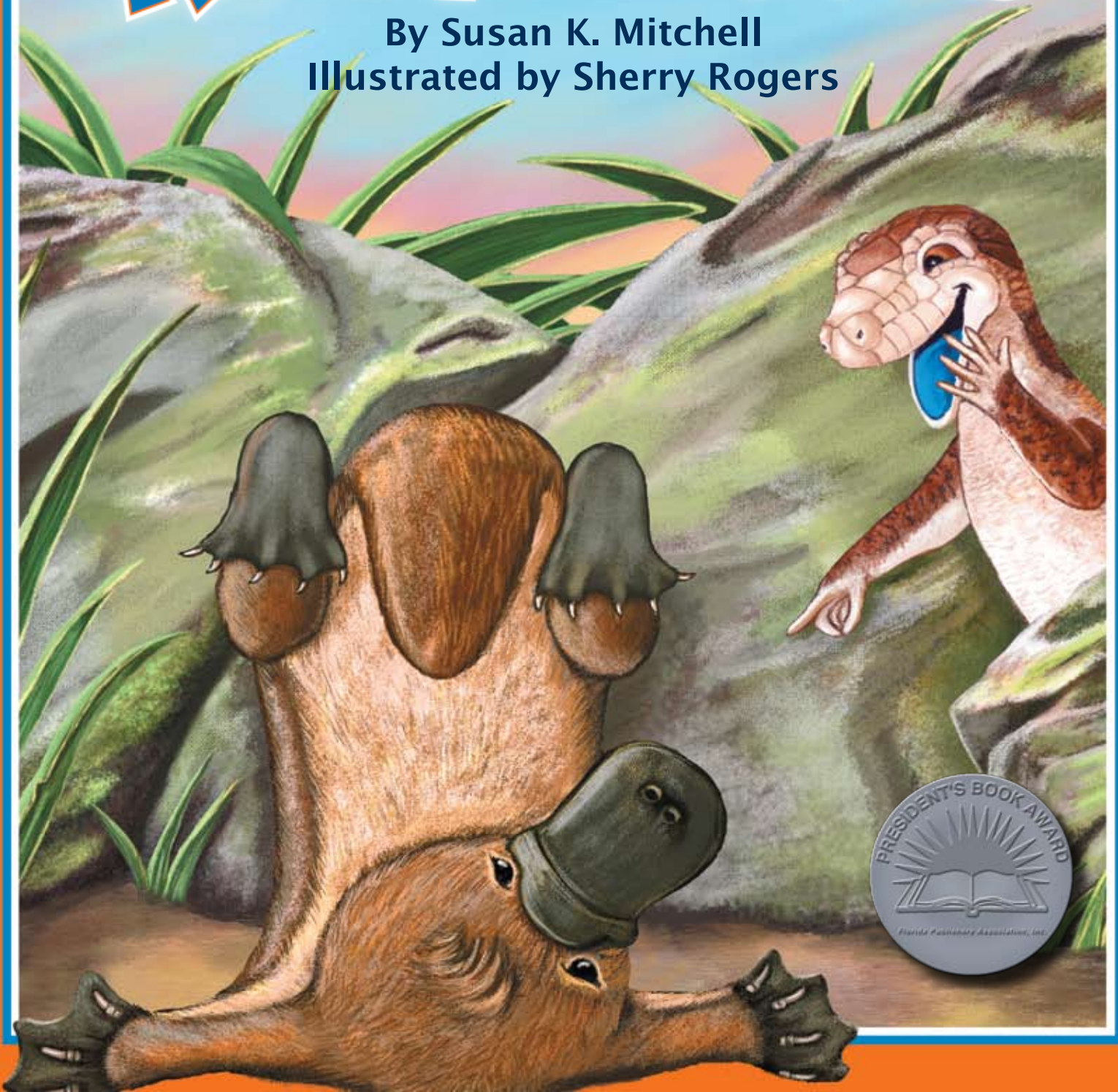


Kersplatypus

By Susan K. Mitchell
Illustrated by Sherry Rogers



Kersplatypus

When a strange little creature appears out of nowhere after the big rains, Australian animals wonder what in the world he could possibly be! His fur, feet, tail, and duck-like bill remind each animal of something different. With a “down-under” spirit, they all pitch in to help him discover where he belongs. Kersplatypus is the story of one creature’s journey to find his place in the world and how he sometimes falls flat on the way there. A heart-warming story with an unmistakable Aussie flare, Kersplatypus proves that with a little determination (and some really good friends) you can pick yourself up when you fall and keep on going.

It’s so much more than a picture book . . . this book is specifically designed to be both a fun-to-read story and a launch pad for discussions and learning. Whether read at home or in a classroom, we encourage adults to do the activities with the young children in their lives. Free online resources and support at www.SylvanDellPublishing.com include:

- For Creative Minds as seen in the book (in English & Spanish):
 - Platypus Fun Facts
 - An Outback Animal Adaptation Matching Activity for:
 - Platypus
 - Wallaby
 - Blue-tongued Skink
 - Bandicoot
 - Brushtail Possum
 - Kookaburra
 - Sorting by carnivore, herbivore, or omnivore
 - Animal classification activity
 - Bully or Friend?
 - Teaching Activities:
 - Reading Questions
 - Mathematics
 - Language Arts
 - Geography
 - Science
 - Coloring Pages
 - Interactive Quizzes: Reading Comprehension, For Creative Minds, and Math Word Problems
 - English and Spanish Audiobooks
 - Related Websites
 - Aligned to State Standards (searchable database)
 - Accelerated Reader and Reading Counts! Quizzes
 - Lexile and Fountas & Pinnell Reading Levels
- eBooks with Auto-Flip, Auto-Read, and selectable English and Spanish text and audio available for purchase online.

Thanks to Geoff Williams of the Australian Platypus Conservancy and to Ron Fricke, Deputy Director of the Toledo Zoo for verifying the accuracy of the information in this book.

Susan K. Mitchell is a children’s author with many hats in her collection: author, mom, wife, pre-school teacher, and Spanish teacher. Susan loves creating a silly world of words for kids. The idea of *Kersplatypus* quite literally came from a word she made up when her youngest daughter fell down one day. Surrounded by kids all day, every day, she has no shortage of story ideas. Susan is also the author of two other picture books: *The Rainforest Grew All Around* and *Stone Pizza*. She has also written more than fourteen non-fiction chapter books for older readers on topics ranging from entertainment to architecture to animals. Susan, her husband, and two wonderful daughters live outside of Houston with their dog and two crazy cats.

Sherry Rogers spent twelve years as a corporate graphic designer and artist before “leaving it all behind” for the freelance world. In addition to illustrating *Kersplatypus*, Sherry has illustrated *Burro’s Tortillas* and *If You Were a Parrot* for Sylvan Dell as well as *Counting Little Geckos*. Sherry, her husband and two children live in Northern California.



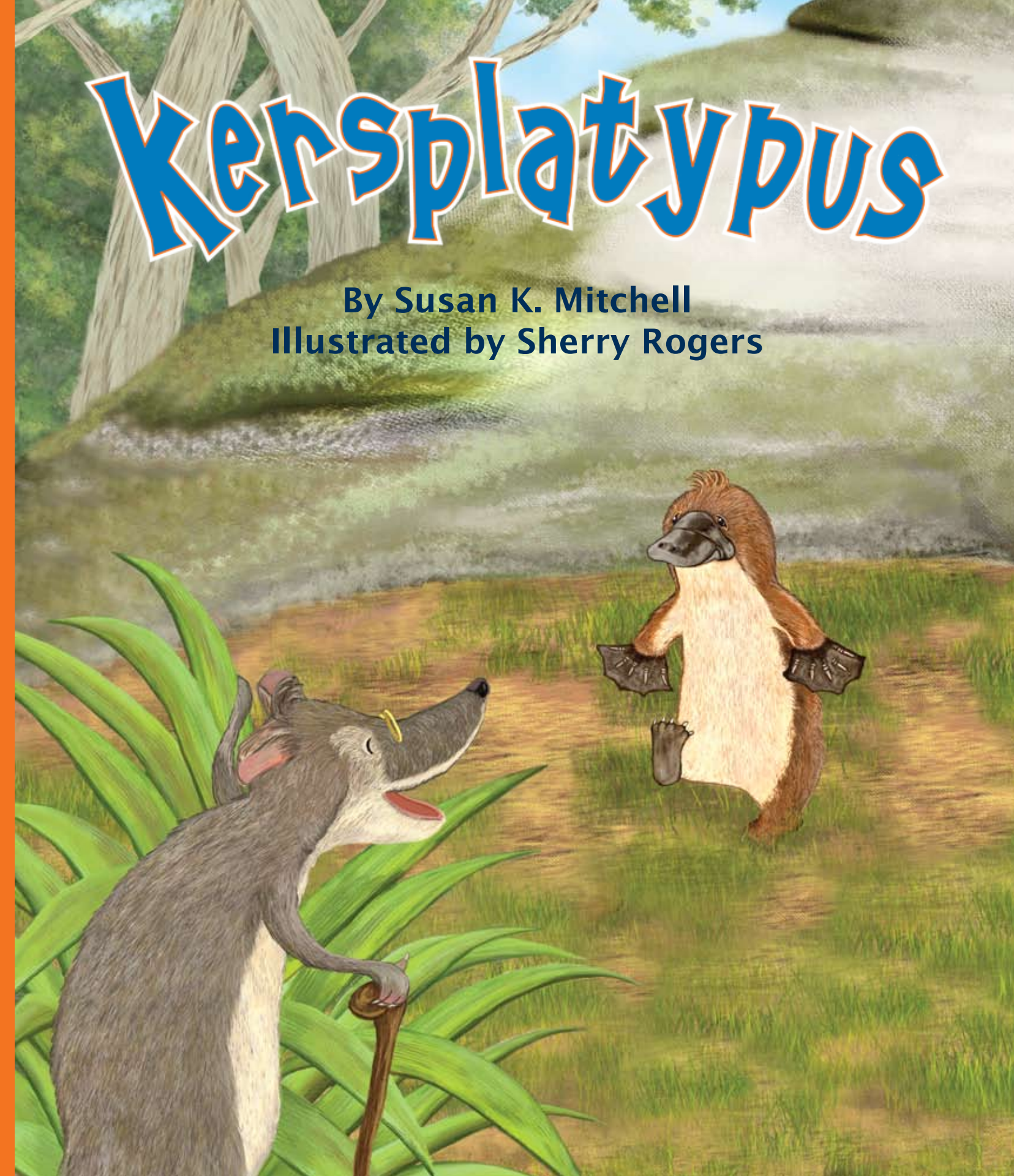
Susan K. Mitchell



Sherry Rogers

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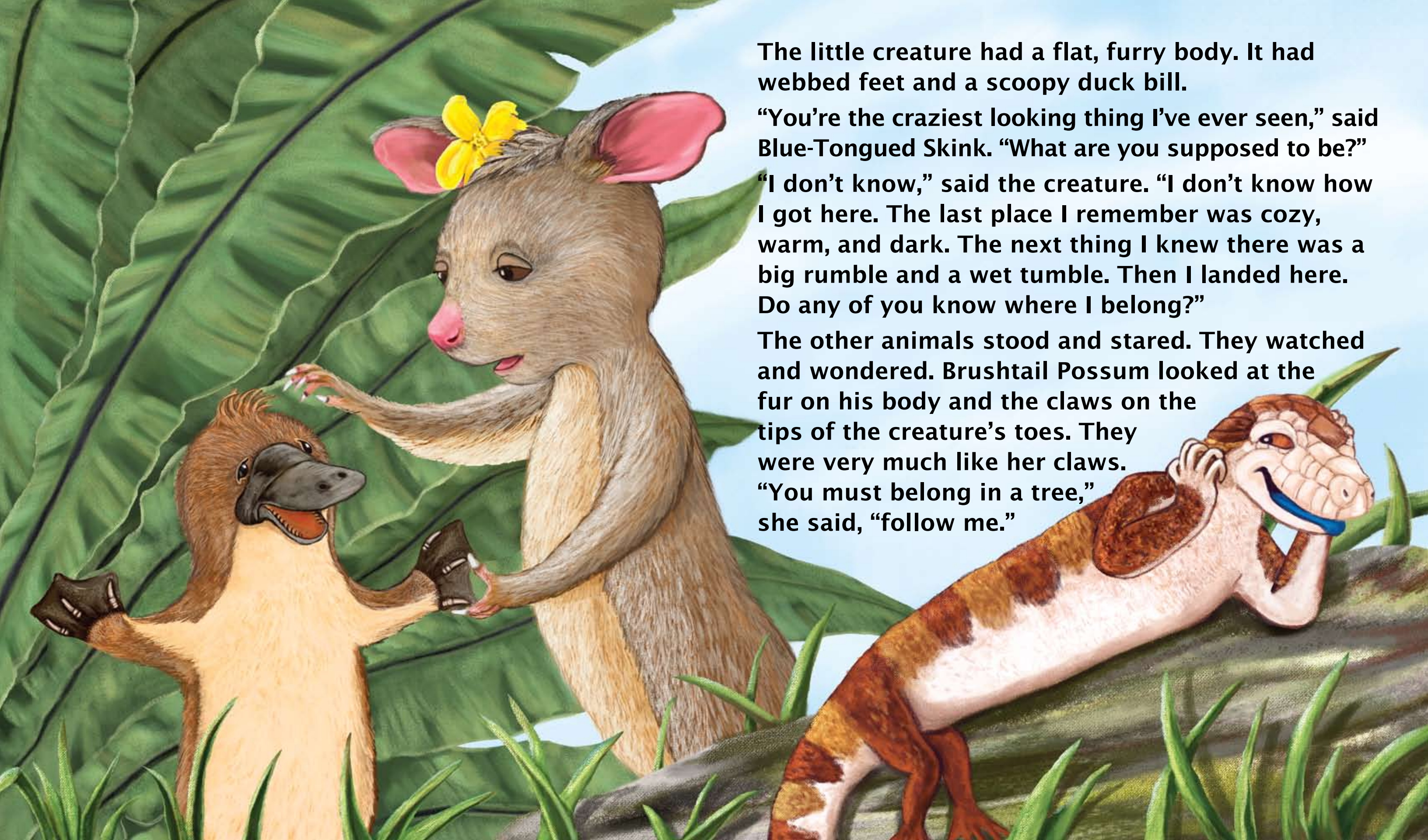
The creature definitely did not belong there.
Outback animals gathered around the tiny, damp
thing in the grass.

“Crikey, what’s that?” said Brushtail Possum.

“I’ve never seen anything like it,” said Kookaburra.

“Must have been washed here
by the big rains,” said Wallaby.





The little creature had a flat, furry body. It had webbed feet and a scoopy duck bill.

“You’re the craziest looking thing I’ve ever seen,” said Blue-Tongued Skink. “What are you supposed to be?”

“I don’t know,” said the creature. “I don’t know how I got here. The last place I remember was cozy, warm, and dark. The next thing I knew there was a big rumble and a wet tumble. Then I landed here. Do any of you know where I belong?”

The other animals stood and stared. They watched and wondered. Brushtail Possum looked at the fur on his body and the claws on the tips of the creature’s toes. They were very much like her claws.

“You must belong in a tree,” she said, “follow me.”

An illustration depicting a scene in a forest. On the left, a blue-tongued skink with a brown body and a bright blue tongue is pointing towards the center. In the middle, a platypus with its characteristic brown fur and duck-like bill is clinging to the trunk of a large tree. On the right, a kookaburra with brown and white feathers and a large, dark bill is looking towards the platypus. The background shows a lush green forest with tall grass and trees.

KERSPLAT! He fell flat.

“I don’t think I belong in a tree,” he said.

Blue-Tongued Skink simply laughed.

Kookaburra looked at the creature’s webbed feet and scoopy duck bill. They were very much like other birds she had seen.

“You must belong in the air,” she said, “follow me.”

**She led the creature to a large rock. Kookaburra
raced across the rock, and when she got to the end,
she flapped her wings and soared. She looked down
and waited.**

**The little creature waddled as fast as he could to
the end of the rock, flapped his webbed feet and . . .**



The For Creative Minds educational section may be photocopied or printed from our website by the owner of this book for educational, non-commercial uses. Cross-curricular teaching activities, interactive quizzes, and more are available online. Go to www.SylvanDellPublishing.com and click on the book's cover to explore all the links.

Platypus Fun Facts

Wild platypuses are found in **AUSTRALIA**.

They are mammals just like us, but they lay eggs (monotreme) instead of having live babies!

The babies lap up milk that oozes from pores on the mother's stomach.

Their fur is very thick to keep them dry and warm, even in cold water.

Their tails are long and flat to help them steer through the water.

When they are about four months old, they swim for the first time. Until then, they stay in their underground burrow.

They close their eyes and ears when they dive for food. If necessary, they can stay underwater for up to 10 minutes to hide from predators.

They live on the sides of rivers and lakes in burrows that are up to 50 feet long.

Because they spend so much time in the water, their front feet are webbed like a duck and the toes stretch into "paddles" for swimming. Their back feet are used to help steer and are only partly webbed.



Outback Animal Adaptation Activity

a. Platypus (fur)

The duck-like bill is both a nose and mouth. This long, funny-looking bill is packed with thousands of sensors. They help the platypus find food by sensing any movement made by prey (worms and other little animals).

b. Brushtail Possum (fur)

These marsupials have prehensile tails that are used like hands to grab and hold onto things. They also have very sharp claws to hold onto tree branches. They eat leaves, flowers, fruits, and seeds.

c. Kookaburra (feathers)

Kookaburras are known for their loud, "laughing" call at dawn and dusk. They have claws facing forward and backward to help hold onto tree branches. They eat worms, bugs, and other small animals.

d. Wallaby (fur)

These marsupials use their tails to help balance. They also use their tails to steer when they jump forward. They eat a variety of plants.

e. Blue-Tongued Skink (scaly skin)

When scared, they open their mouths wide, and their bright blue tongues scare off predators. They eat both plants and small animals.

f. Bandicoot (fur)

These marsupials use their snouts to dig for food. They smell and hear very well but don't see very well. They eat both plants and small animals.



___ 1.



___ 2.



___ 3.



___ 4.



___ 5.



___ 6.

Use the information above to determine which animals are carnivores (meat eaters), herbivores (plant eaters), or omnivores (both plants and animals)? What are you?

Animal Classification

When sorting, the first question scientists will ask is whether the item is (or was) alive. 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:

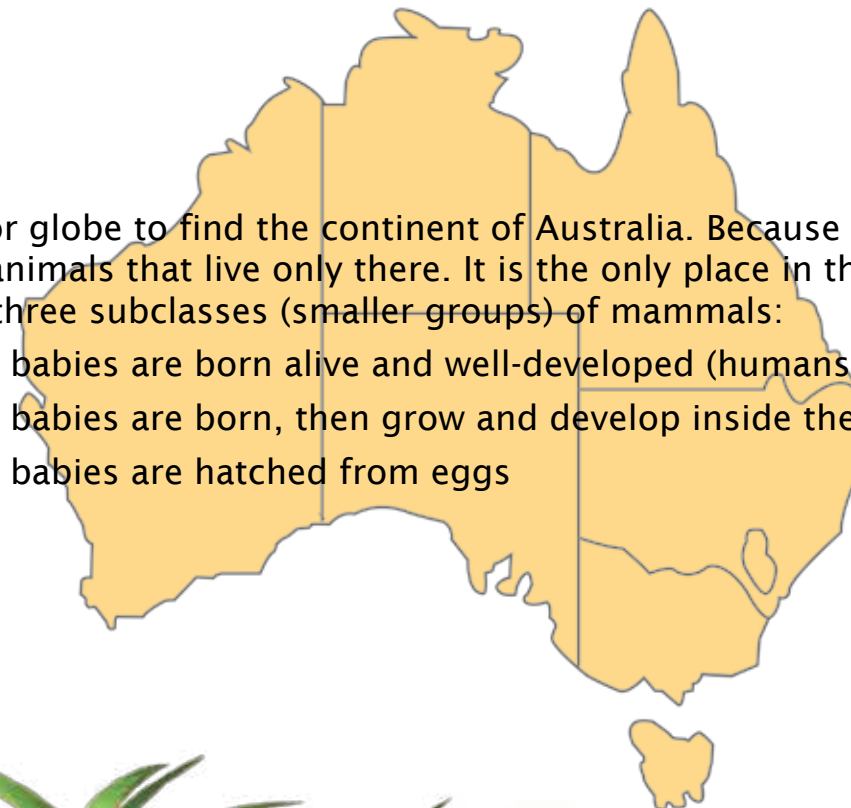
- Does it have hair or fur, feathers, dry skin, or scales?
- Does it breathe air through lungs or water through gills?
- Are the babies born alive or hatched from eggs?
- Does the baby drink milk from its mother?
- Is it warm or cold-blooded?
- How many body parts does the animal have?

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

Sometimes scientists have to make smaller groups within a bigger group to make everything “fit.” For example, most mammal babies are born live instead of hatching from eggs. But, there are two mammals that hatch from eggs: the platypus and several types of echidnas.

Look on a map or globe to find the continent of Australia. Because it is so isolated, there are some animals that live only there. It is the only place in the world where you can find all three subclasses (smaller groups) of mammals:

- Placental** babies are born alive and well-developed (humans, cats & dogs)
- Marsupials** babies are born, then grow and develop inside the mother’s pouch
- Monotremes** babies are hatched from eggs



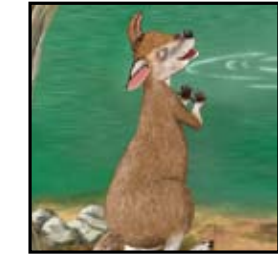
The animals in this book are from three different animal classes. Using information found in the book, can you then match the animal to its class and its subclass? The answers are upside down on the bottom of the page.



Blue-Tongued Skink



Bandicoot



Wallaby



Kookaburra

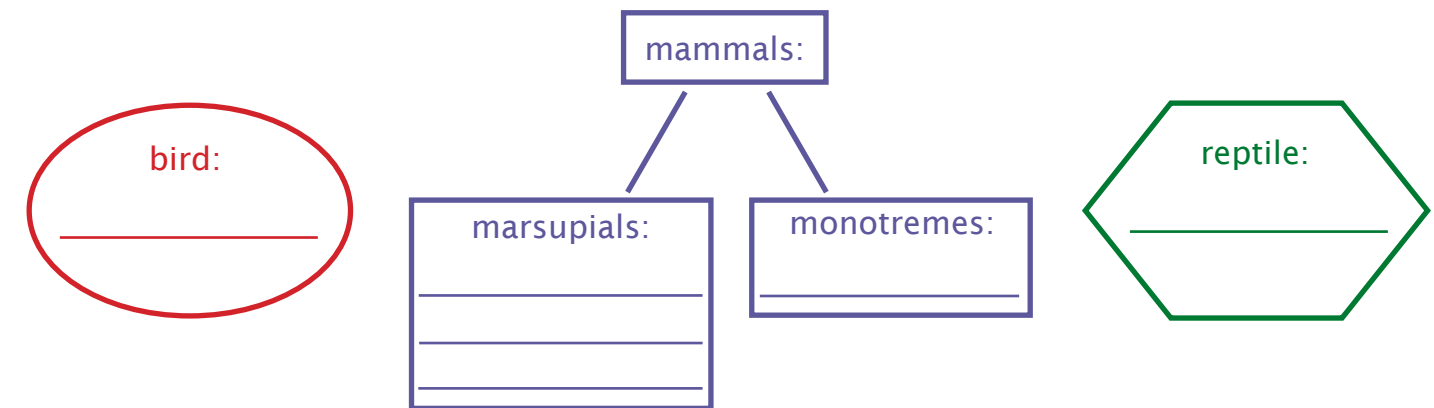


Brushtail Possum



Platypus

- Does the animal have hair or fur? If so, it is a **mammal**.
- Are the babies born, then grow and develop inside their mothers’ pouches?
- Are these mammals hatched from eggs?
- Does it have feathers? If so, it is a **bird**.
- Does it have dry skin or scales? If so, it is a **reptile**.



Answers:
Mammals:
Subclass Marsupial: Brushtail Possum, Wallaby, Bandicoot
Subclass Monotremes: Platypus
Bird: Kookaburra
Reptile: Blue-Tongued Skink

Bully or Friend?

What are some words to describe how you think the baby platypus might have felt when he was washed out of his burrow?

Who were the animals that were most helpful to the baby platypus?

Who was a bully that teased or made fun of the baby platypus?

Which animals would you like to have as friends? Why?

Which animals would you like to be most similar to and why?

Has anyone ever made fun of you? Did you like it? What did you do?

Who do you think you could talk to who would be able to help you?



For Emily, Rachel, and Joseph; with love and laughter always—SKM
To my husband Dale, and my children Josh and Rachel, who bring true joy to my life—SR

Thanks to Geoff Williams of the Australian Platypus Conservancy and to Ron Fricke, Deputy Director of the Toledo Zoo for verifying the accuracy of the information in this book

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Summary: When a strange little creature appears out of nowhere after the big rains, Australian animals wonder what in the world he could possibly be! With a "down-under" spirit, they all pitch in to help him discover where he belongs. Includes "For Creative Minds" section with platypus fun facts and other activities.

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