

For Creative Minds

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Platypus Fun Facts

Wild platypuses are found in
AUSTRALIA.

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

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

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

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

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

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.

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.



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).

_____ 1.



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.

_____ 2.



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.

_____ 3.



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.

_____ 4.



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.

_____ 5.



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.

_____ 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?

Answers: a.5, b.4, c.1, d.2, e.3, f.6

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

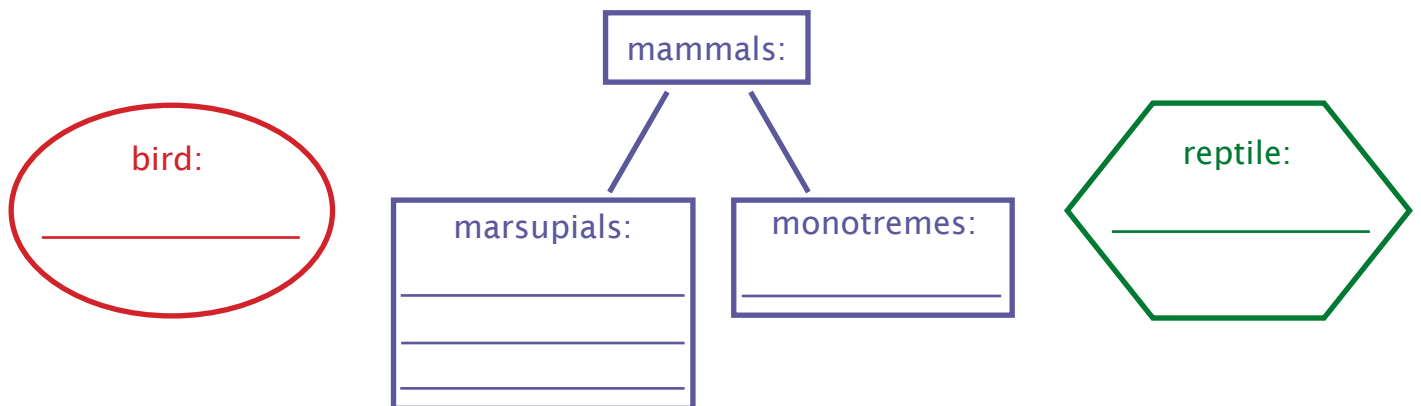
Does the animal have hair or fur? If so, it is a **mammal**.

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

Publisher's Cataloging-In-Publication Data

Mitchell, Susan K.

Kersplatypus / by Susan K. Mitchell ; illustrated by Sherry Rogers.

p. : col. ill. ; cm.

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.

Interest age level: 003-007.

Interest grade level: P-2.

ISBN: 978-1-934359-07-5 (hardcover)

ISBN: 978-1-934359-23-5 (pbk.)

1. Platypus--Juvenile fiction. 2. Friends--Juvenile fiction. 3. Teasing--Juvenile fiction. 4. Platypus--Fiction. 5. Friends--Fiction. 6. Teasing--Fiction. I. Rogers, Sherry II. Title.

PZ10.3.M58 Ke 2008[E] 2007935082

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Printed in China

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976 Houston Northcutt Blvd., Suite 3
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