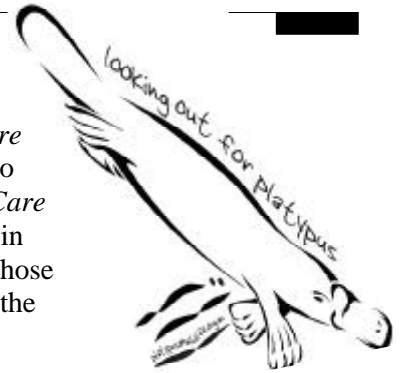


# Queensland Platypus Care News No. 1

March 2006



Wildlife Queensland  
Your Voice for Your Wildlife



## A Message From the Coordinator

Hi there, and welcome to the first *Queensland PlatypusCare Newsletter*. This newsletter has been sent to everybody who has donated platypus records to our *Queensland PlatypusCare* project over the past 18 months; to those who have helped in other ways such as providing venues for meetings; and to those who've just said that they'd like to be kept up to date with the *PlatypusCare* project.

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 our volunteers Chris Hosking, Clare Stawski, Florence Fang, Shaw Innes, and Laura von Haeseler. We are also especially grateful to the Moggill Creek Catchment Group, the Save Our Waterways Now group and the Pine Rivers Branch of WPSQ took the concept of this project to heart and ran their own platypus surveys.

The information contained herein is a snap shot of the data provided by you, and we hope that you find some satisfaction in seeing the big picture emerging from everyone's small pieces of information.

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.

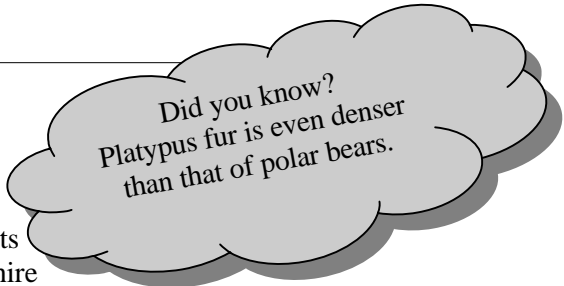
We respect the privacy of those who send us their platypus sightings, so while we keep a record of people's names and contact numbers for data management purposes, these aren't passed on to any third parties.

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## Regional Round-Up

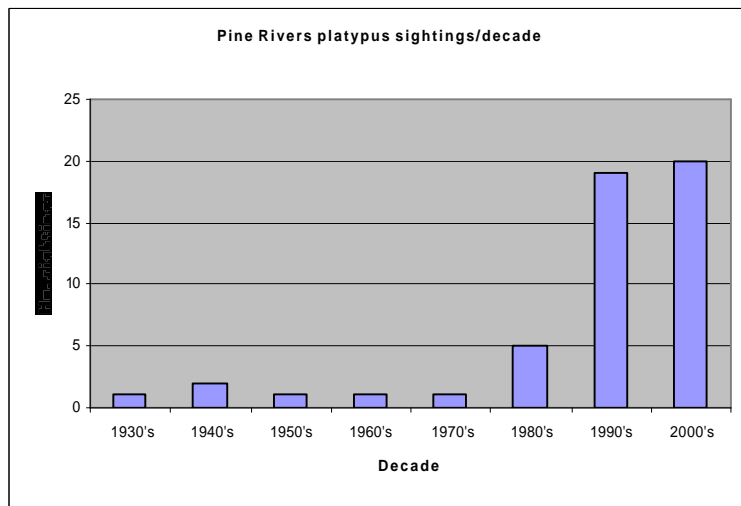
### PINE RIVERS



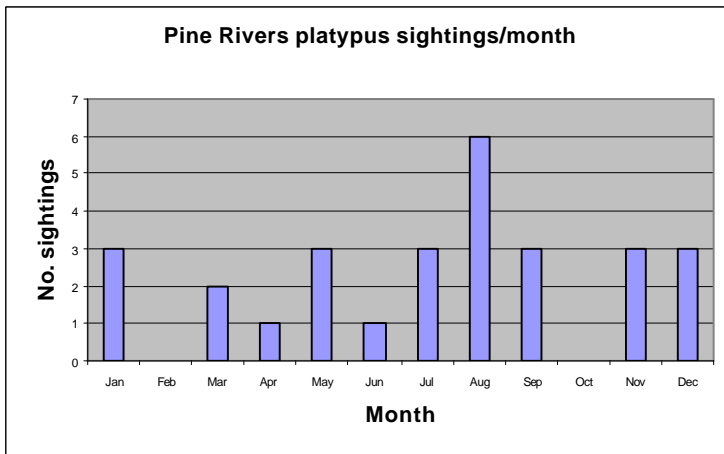
*PlatypusCare* in the Pine Rivers Shire, on the northern outskirts of Brisbane, was funded by a donation from the Pine Rivers Shire Council and was run over a twelve month period from late 2004 to 2005. During that time we compiled a database of 74 platypus sighting records from waterways within the Pine Rivers local government area (LGA). Of these, 25 are new records which have been canvassed during public presentations, field days and opportunistic interviews with present or past residents. The rest are records that were held in the databases of the Queensland Museum and EPA.

Of these 74 records, 66 come with enough information to plot them accurately. Using these records, platypus have been recorded from 15 waterways within the Shire, including:

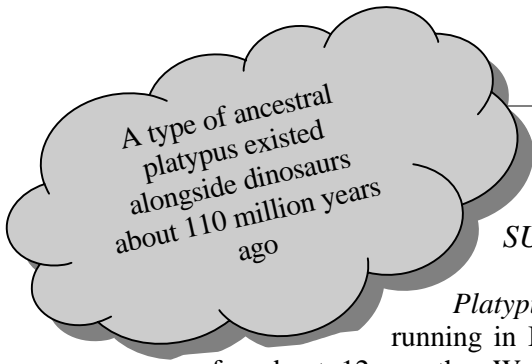
North Pine River	22
South Pine River	13
Cedar Creek	6
Sandy Creek	6
Freshwater Creek	2
Kobble Creek	2
Albany Creek	2
Terrors Creek	2
Todd's Gully	2
Wongan Creek	1
Branch Creek	1
Bergin Creek	1
Dawson Creek	1
Rush Creek	2
Cabbage Tree Creek	3



We know the years in which 50 of these sightings were recorded. The majority (19 and 20 respectively) were recorded in the 1990's and the 2000's. Otherwise there are between one and five sightings recorded each decade from the 1930's through to and including the 1970's. The temporal distribution of these records probably does not indicate that platypus numbers have increased in the shire since 1990, they probably merely reflect a phenomenon whereby more recent records are reported more frequently either because they are fresher in people's memories, or because of a public perception that older records are less valuable and therefore not worth reporting. This is not so, we place as much value on older records as on recent ones.



Platypus have been sighted in Pine Rivers Shire during most months, and there is no real pattern in the monthly pattern of sightings. Although there are differences between months, these do not seem to reflect any particular seasonal trends.



A type of ancestral platypus existed alongside dinosaurs about 110 million years ago

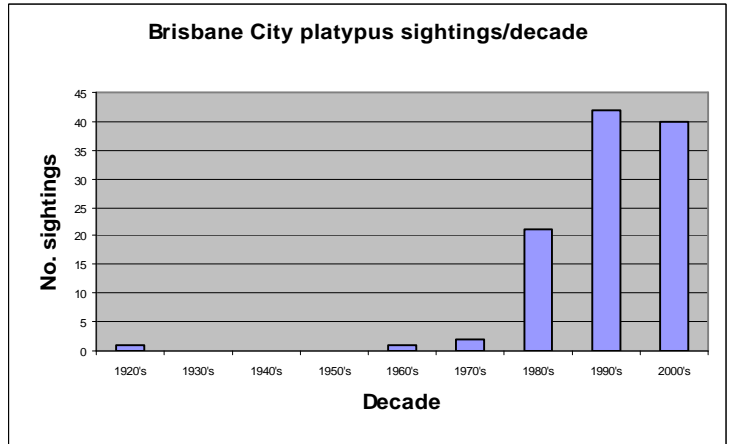
**BRISBANE SUMMARY**

*PlatypusCare* has been running in Brisbane City now for about 12 months. We have compiled a database of 142 platypus sighting records from waterways within the Brisbane City LGA. Of these, 61 are new records which have been canvassed during public presentations, field days and opportunistic interviews with present or past residents. The remainder are records that were held in the databases of the Queensland Museum, EPA and Brisbane City Council.

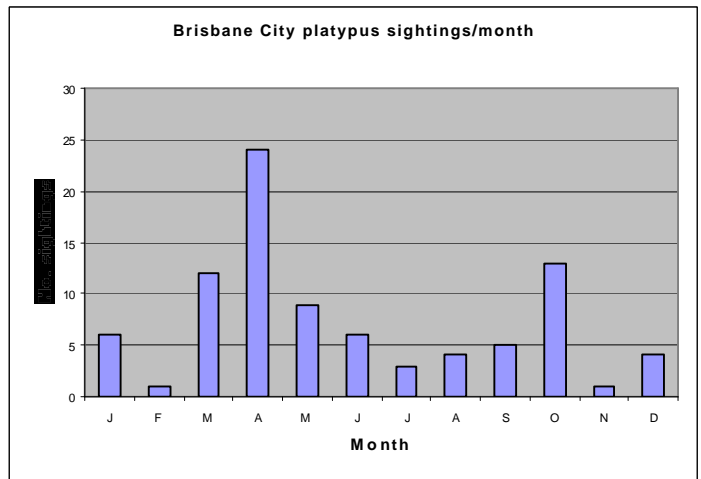
Of these 142 records, 92 come with enough information to plot them accurately. Based on these, we know that platypus occur in at least 21 waterways within the City, including:

Brisbane River	8
Moggill Creek	30
Enoggera Creek	16
Gold Creek	12
Farm Creek	3
Kholo Creek	3
Kedron Brook	2
McKay Brook	2
Mt. Ommaney Creek	2
Pullen Pullen Creek	2
Scrubby Creek	2
Woogaroo Creek	1
Blunder Creek	1
Cabbage Tree Creek	1
Cubberla Creek	1
Ithaca Creek	1
Little Kholo Creek	1
Rocky Waterholes	1
Sandy Creek	1
Ugly Gully	1
Buhot Creek	1

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.



The month of sighting was recorded with 88 of the Brisbane City records (below). These indicate a drop in sightings over a four-month period from November through to February inclusive. This is particularly compelling given that this is the time when many more people are out and about during summer and if anything, we would expect the database to be biased towards more sightings at this time. An explanation for this could be that females are incubating eggs and lactating in their burrows during this time and so are not out in the water as often. Alternatively, platypus may be more nocturnal during this warmer and more productive time of the year, and so not so visible.

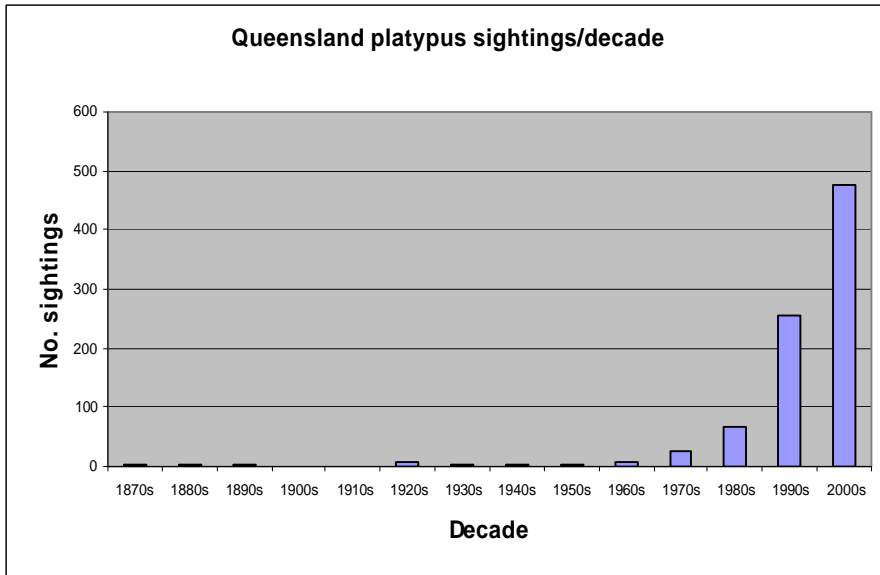
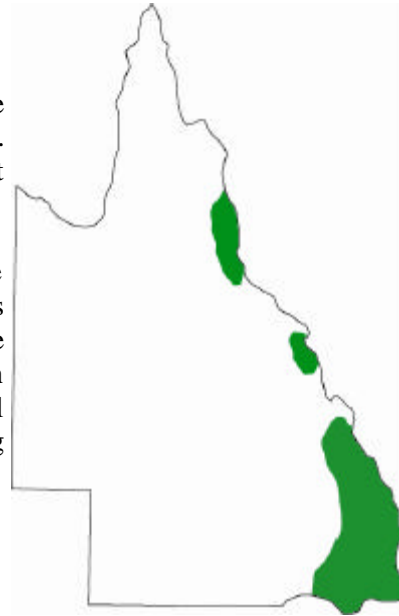


Preliminary analyses reveal several interesting trends. Firstly, platypus continue to survive within the urban reaches of many of the tributary waterways of the Brisbane River, within about 10km of the CBD. Secondly, there appear to be many more sightings of Platypus on Brisbane's northside compared to south of the river. This may be explained by the less built-up watershed on the northside, less industrial land-use, or perhaps just that we haven't looked as hard on the southside.

*THE REST OF QUEENSLAND*

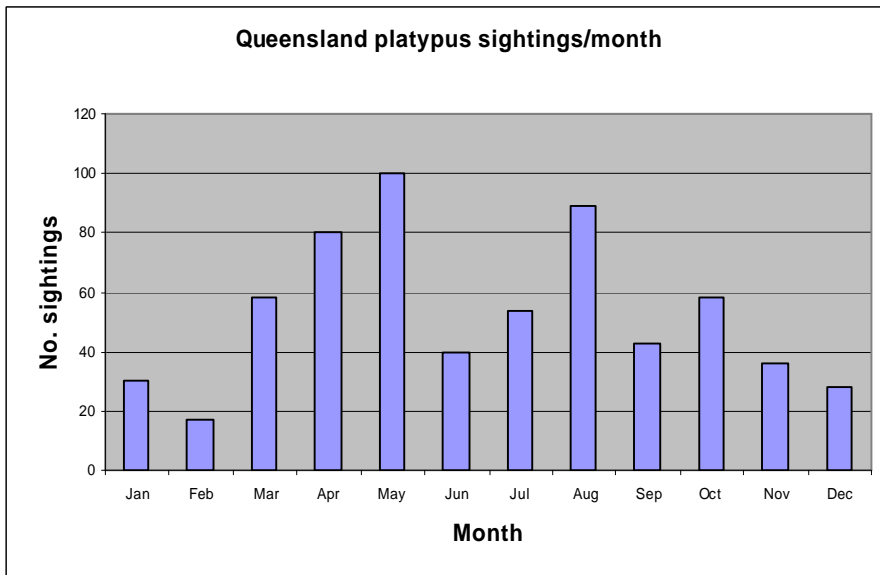
We have collated a total of 911 platypus sightings for the rest of Queensland (i.e. excluding Pine Rivers and Brisbane). Of these, 283 are new records received by us during the past 18 months.

Within Queensland, platypus have been sighted in 56 of the state's local government areas, however the species distribution seems to be split into three discrete subpopulations; (i) southeast Queensland, (ii) central eastern Queensland (Mackay area), and (iii) the wet tropics. We will discuss each of these areas in more detail in forthcoming newsletters.



795 records came with information on the year they were sighted. The vast majority of sightings have been made in the 1990's and 2000's (256 and 477 respectively) but again, this is probably due to a bias in reporting rates rather than an increase in platypus numbers. The state database shows that platypus sightings have been recorded every decade since 1870, with the exception of the 1910's.

“...platypus sightings have been recorded every decade since 1870...”



The monthly distribution of sightings show that the four months, November through to February inclusive, are the four poorest for platypus sightings. As mentioned above, this probably does indicate that platypus are less active during this time.

## ONGOING AND FUTURE PROJECTS

### Gold Coast

Our Gold Coast platypus project is continuing to accumulate local records and spread the word in the Gold Coast City Council area. Our platypus project officer, Glenn Costello, is contacting catchment groups in the Gold Coast area in order to raise awareness of platypus there, accumulate community information on platypus distribution and drum up support for our Gold Coast surveys (see the platypus activities calendar for dates).

### Redlands

The Bayside Branch of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland is coordinating a Platypus Survey in Redlands Shire. There is very little known of platypus in this area and we are hoping to confirm the continued existence of the species and locate new populations during surveys here in March and April. We will report on these in forthcoming newsletters.

### Upper Brisbane River

We have signed a project agreement with SEQ Catchments to conduct platypus talks and a survey in the upper Brisbane River catchment. Four talks will be delivered within the area and a survey will be conducted in the Fernvale area, downstream of Wivenhoe Dam. Watch this space for future announcements with regard to this project.



## 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>
March 28	Platypus survey training	Gold Coast City	Glenn 0439 724270
March 29	Platypus survey	Gold Coast City	Glenn 0439 724270
April 1	Platypus survey training	Gold Coast City	Glenn 0439 724270
April 8	Platypus survey	Gold Coast City	Glenn 0439 724270
April 21	Platypus survey training	Redlands Shire	Doreen 0407 157556
April 22	Platypus survey	Redlands Shire	Doreen 0407 157556

**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.



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Australian Platypus Conservancy



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