

Monotremes

Study*ladder*



Discussion Questions:

- 1) How are monotremes classified?
- 2) Which animals belong to the monotreme family?
- 3) What features do they have in common?
- 4) Where do monotremes live?
- 5) How have monotremes adapted to their environment?
- 6) What is the conservation status of these animals?

Monotremes

Two animals belong to the monotreme family:

Echidna

Platypus

Monotremes have a single opening, called the cloaca, which is used for both reproduction and excretion.

The name monotreme has been in use since the mid 19th century. It comes from a combination of English and Greek:

mono- (English meaning *single*)

trēma (Greek meaning *hole*)



How are they similar and different to other animals?

- They are mammals. They have hair and are warm blooded. (However, their body temperature is lower than most mammals.)
- They feed their young milk produced in their mammary glands. (However, they don't have teats. Their milk secretes through special patches of skin and the babies lap up the milk.)
- Like birds and reptiles, these animals lay eggs. (They are the only mammals that lay eggs.)
- Unlike marsupials, these animals do not have a permanent pouch where their young develop. (Echidnas have a temporary pouch but platypuses have no pouch at all.)
- Like reptiles, their legs protrude outwards and then downwards. They waddle while they walk.



The Platypus

The platypus lives in fresh water environments. They can be found in Eastern states of the Australian mainland and across Tasmania.

Platypuses are rarely seen during the day as they are most active at night when they forage for food.



They spend their days in burrows that they dig in the banks of rivers, creeks or ponds.

Their ideal habitat is a slow moving waterway with earth banks. Overhanging vegetation and rocky outcrops provide a sheltered environment for their burrows.





Platypuses can be found in slow running waterways.

The Echidna

There are two species of echidna:

- The Long-beaked Echidna lives in the highland forests of Papua New Guinea.
- The Short-beaked Echidna lives in a wide range of habitats. They can be found in all states of the Australian mainland and Tasmania. They can also be found in coastal and highland regions of Papua New Guinea.



Short-beaked Echidna

Echidnas thrive in a variety of environments. They can cope with very cold conditions as well as very warm temperate climates. However, populations have dwindled in urban regions.





Echidnas live in forest, woodland, heath, grassland and arid environments.