

# Platypus Month Schools Pack 2025

Seize it, Snip it, Bin it – Keep Platypus Safe From Loopy Litter

## Purpose

This Pack is designed to help you celebrate Platypus Month within your school. The theme of the 2025 Platypus Month in September is loopy litter.

## Background

Loopy litter is any type of litter that can form a ring or loop and includes (but is not limited to):

- Hair ties
- Elastic or rubber bands
- Fishing line
- Plastic or metal rings
- String or twine

### How does litter end up in our waterways?

Many people don't realise that litter dropped on the ground doesn't just disappear—it often ends up in our rivers, creeks and lakes. In urban areas, rain washes litter into the stormwater system, which flows directly into local waterways. Loopy litter like rubber bands, hair ties, and plastic rings, enter platypus habitat through the stormwater network, where they pose a serious threat to the platypus and other wildlife.

### Why is loopy litter so dangerous?

Loopy litter poses a significant threat to the platypus due to its body shape and feeding behaviour. Platypus are carnivorous and feed exclusively on aquatic macroinvertebrates or 'waterbugs', including insect larvae, yabbies, shrimp, worms, and snails.

Platypus forage underwater by swimming along the bottom of rivers and creeks with their eyes closed, using electroreceptors in their bills to detect prey. While hunting for food loopy litter can get caught around the platypus' bill. Because of their streamlined, tapered body shape, these litter items can migrate further down the platypus' body and tighten around its neck, torso, or shoulders.

Over time these litter items can tighten around the platypus, causing serious injury or even death.

Once entangled in loopy litter, the platypus is often unable to free itself. Litter entangled around a platypus can get snagged underwater and drown the animal, reduce the animal's ability to feed or

rub and cut into the animal's flesh causing serious injury. Captured platypus entangled in litter are generally in poor condition and often do not survive, despite receiving medical treatment.

It's estimated that [4% of platypuses in Greater Melbourne are entangled in litter](#) at any given time. In some waterways, like the Werribee River, litter entanglement rates are [estimated to be much higher at 15%](#). Most commonly reported entanglements involve loopy litter like hair ties, elastic bands, fishing line or plastic ring seals from food jars.

Education about the dangers of these litter items is vital to protect the platypus. [Higher rates of platypus litter entanglement occur in areas of greater human population density](#) so we can all play a part to prevent this issue from escalating into the future.

### Why is Platypus Month in September?

September is a critical time for platypuses in Victoria—it's their breeding season! As platypuses are out searching for mates, they become even more vulnerable to the dangers of litter in their environment. You can make a real difference during this important time by seizing, snipping, and binning loopy litter.

## How you can help at school

### 1. Platypus Month school activities

You can educate your students about platypus and build awareness of the impact of loopy litter during September.

The impacts of loopy litter in our waterways can be reduced if community members correctly dispose of these items or respond to the litter they encounter through the 'Seize it, Snip it, Bin it' campaign:

- **Seize it:** Pick up any litter, especially loopy litter. Litter dropped on the ground ends up in our rivers and creeks.
- **Snip it:** Cut rings or loops, like hair ties or rubber bands, before disposal to reduce the risk of entanglement.
- **Bin it:** Always dispose of litter correctly to stop it from reaching our waterways.

The activities on the following pages are suited to middle primary, upper primary and lower secondary but can be adapted for other age groups. There are suggestions for a variety of learning styles.

#### Tuning In videos:

Platypus Keeper Talk <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o4ZOWLvHb1c>



Melbourne Water Platypus Program <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tAVXiKMhckw>

### Tuning In Fact sheets:





What does a platypus eat? [https://www.riverdetectives.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/What-Does-A-Platypus-Eat\\_ScreenReady.pdf](https://www.riverdetectives.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/What-Does-A-Platypus-Eat_ScreenReady.pdf)

Where are the waterbugs? [https://www.riverdetectives.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Where-are-the-Waterbugs\\_ScreenReady.pdf](https://www.riverdetectives.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Where-are-the-Waterbugs_ScreenReady.pdf)

Why are waterbugs so important? [https://www.riverdetectives.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Why-are-Waterbugs-so-Important\\_Screenready.pdf](https://www.riverdetectives.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Why-are-Waterbugs-so-Important_Screenready.pdf)

| Ways to be Smart   | Activity outline   |
|--|--|
|  <p><b>Word Smart</b><br/><i>I learn best by reading, writing &amp; speaking</i></p>  | <p>Read this <a href="#">article</a> about the unacceptable impacts of litter on the platypus. Watch this <a href="#">video</a> about the role of urban stormwater in transporting litter and this video about the impact of deadly pieces of Loopy Litter.</p> <p>Write an article for your school newsletter, content for an educational facebook post, design a powerpoint presentation, narrate a video or write a letter to the editor/article for a local media outlet to educate people about loopy litter and how it impacts the platypus. You could even get creative and write a rap or song to get the message across.</p> <p>Include the slogan, 'Seize It, Snip It, Bin It' in your piece, or be creative and develop your own slogan that covers the above actions!</p>  |
|  <p><b>Number Smart</b><br/><i>I learn best by working with numbers/science</i></p> | <p>Platypus eat 20% of their body weight in waterbugs each day! Check out these <a href="#">water bug fact sheets</a>, noting bug sizes.</p> <p>Choose your favourite waterbug. Estimate the weight of your favourite waterbug. How much do you think a platypus weighs? If a platypus was to eat only your chosen waterbug species, how many bugs would the platypus need to eat each day? Repeat the activity for another waterbug species.</p> <p>Use the habitat information on the <a href="#">fact sheets</a> or use this <a href="#">poster</a> to learn which waterway habitat zone your chosen waterbugs live in. How might loopy litter prevent a platypus from eating their daily fill? Brainstorm some other examples of loopy litter that a platypus might get entangled in.</p> <p>How many potential loopy litter items can you count in your classroom? i.e. items that if washed into waterways could harm the platypus.</p> <p>What can you do to stop these items from entering our waterways and harming the platypus?</p> |



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|--|--|
|  <p><b>Picture Smart</b><br/><i>I learn best by drawing and visualising</i></p> | <p>Highlight the issue of Loopy Litter in an eye-catching simple manner, educate others about the threat to platypus and outline what they can do to help.</p> <p>You might design a poster for display at school, a mural, a sign for your local waterway, a flyer to hand out at an event, a stormwater pit stencil or a cartoon strip for friends, etc.</p> <p>Use any media you like but include the slogan, 'Seize It, Snip It, Bin It':</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seize it: Pick up any litter, especially loopy litter. Litter dropped on the ground ends up in our rivers and creeks.</li> <li>• Snip it: Cut any rings or loops, like hair ties or rubber bands, before disposal to reduce the risk of entanglement.</li> <li>• Bin it: Always dispose of litter correctly to stop it from reaching our waterways</li> </ul> |
|  <p><b>Body Smart</b><br/><i>I learn best by being active and hands on</i></p>  | <p>Make a model platypus from clay or playdough. Add captions on toothpicks to your model to label/explain how the parts of a platypus help it survive.</p> <p>Now make another model including a piece of Loopy Litter around the platypus. Use captions on toothpicks to explain how this would impact the health of the platypus.</p> <p>Or make a diorama showing either a healthy platypus environment or a dangerous platypus environment including items of loopy litter.</p>   |
|  <p><b>People Smart</b><br/><i>I learn best by working with others</i></p>    | <p>Explore the map on <a href="#">PlatypusSPOT</a>. Where and when have platypus been sighted near you?</p> <p>Use the resources in the <a href="#">platy-project toolkit</a> to head to a waterway with others (make sure you are with an adult). See if you can spot a platypus. Upload your results to <a href="#">PlatypusSPOT</a> and work out what might be needed to make your waterway more platypus friendly.</p> <p>Plan and perform a dramatisation of a healthy platypus environment or a dangerous platypus environment where loopy litter is present. Freeze the scene at various points and ask your audience to share how they are feeling.</p>  |
|  <p><b>Self Smart</b><br/><i>I learn best by myself</i></p>                   | <p>Loopy litter is the most common type of litter found entangled around the platypus. Loopy litter is anything circular or can form a loop, that can get caught around a platypus. Brainstorm the everyday items from your house/school/shed that could become dangerous loopy litters for platypus in a waterway. There are more than you think!</p> <p>How does the issue of platypus entanglement make you feel? Think about it and what you can do to help while you do some mindful colouring.</p> <p>Make a personal pact to always 'Seize It, Snip It, Bin It' and think about how you could share this message with others.</p>   |

## 2. Join a webinar for educators with Jessica Thomas, Specialist Platypus Keeper at Healesville Sanctuary.

This webinar, open to all educators, will be held on **Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> August, 4-4:45pm**, as part of ResourceSmart Schools 'after the bell' webinar series.

Hosted by [ResourceSmart Schools](#) and [River Detectives](#) facilitators, the webinar will be a unique opportunity to hear:

- from an expert about platypus, what loopy litter is, why it is such a threat, what can be done
- talk about Platypus month and the resources available

Register for the event: <https://events.humanitix.com/platypus-month-get-in-the-loop>

## 3. Explore the Zoos Victoria website

There are platypus teaching and learning resources for [Primary](#) and [Secondary teachers](#). There are even some for [VCE](#).

# How you can help in your community

## 1. Hold a platypus spotting event

September is one of the best times to spot platypuses in Victoria, as it coincides with the species breeding season when individuals are actively searching for mates. During this peak time in activity, there's a good chance you might spot a platypus!

If you haven't had the pleasure of seeing a platypus previously in the wild, check out these [Spotting Hints](#) from Australian Platypus Conservancy. The page provides detailed advice about where and when to look, and what to look for!

Australian Conservation Foundation have made it easy to organise your own platypus spotting event. Their [Platy-Project Toolkit](#) contains everything you need to organise a spotting event. Once you have held your event, remember to enter your platypus data into the [PlatypusSPOT platform](#). Every observation helps scientists better understand where platypuses live and how to protect them!

- Spotting Hints - <https://platypus.asn.au/spotting-hints/>
- Platy-Project Toolkit - <https://www.acf.org.au/get-involved/the-platy-project/platy-project-toolkit>
- PlatypusSPOT database – <https://platypusspot.org/>

See **Appendix 1** for suggested event outline and talking points.

### Spotted a platypus during Platypus Month (or anytime)?

Make sure to upload sightings using the [PlatypusSPOT](#) platform. Every observation helps scientists better understand where platypuses live and how to protect them!

## 2. Host a Platypus Guardian watch party

Witness the story of Pete Walsh, a Tasmanian man who befriends a platypus he names 'Zoom'. With the help of experts, Pete learns more about the platypus's secret world in a mission to protect them from the dangers of urban development.

Watch the Platypus Guardian documentary solo or bring your community together to learn more about the platypus and what threatens this unique and iconic species.

The Platypus Guardian is rated PG and can be viewed for free on ABC iview:

<https://iview.abc.net.au/show/platypus-guardian>

## 3. Hold a litter cleanup event

Collecting litter before it enters our waterways is essential for protecting the platypus and other wildlife. By holding a litter cleanup event, you can make a real difference to your local waterway.

Things to consider before holding a litter clean-up:

- **Location:** Litter-hotspots are locations where litter frequently accumulates in significant quantities, making them important areas to priorities for clean-up activities. Hotspots are usually near areas of high human activity like parks, transport hubs and roadsides. Eventually litter from these areas will enter our waterways via the stormwater network. Contact your local council or catchment management authority for advice on suitable litter-hotspot locations for clean-up events.
- **Safety:** It is important to make sure you conduct a site visit, risk assessment and obtain any necessary permissions from local authorities before holding your clean-up event. Check weather conditions in the lead up to your event and provide attendees with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) like gloves and tongs.
- **Recording litter data:** Recording data on collected litter is a great citizen science activity and helps researchers understand more about littering and litter-hotspots. If you are based in Victoria, record litter data from your event using **LitterWatch**:  
<https://www.litterwatchvictoria.org.au/>
- **Snipping loopy litter:** Remember to encourage event attendees to snip any loopy litter before disposing in the bin! At the beginning of your event you might want to talk about why loopy litter is a threat to our wildlife and how it impacts the platypus.



It is **highly recommended** that you connect with your local council or catchment management authority prior to conducting a litter clean up event. They will be able to assist you with choosing a location, making sure your event is safe and may provide equipment and useful resources.

Clean up Australia Day encourages communities, schools and businesses to participate in litter clean-ups everyday through its 'Every Day Clean Up' program. You can register your event with the program to receive a Clean Up Kit containing PPE equipment and helpful resources:

<https://www.cleanup.org.au/clean-up-australia-day#>

## 4. Report platypus in distress

If you find a platypus in distress or entangled in litter please contact Wildlife Victoria:

**24/7 phone line:** (03) 8400 7300

**Online form:** <https://www.wildlifelifevictoria.org.au/report-a-wildlife-emergency>

## Other useful resources

### Platypus Month campaign graphics



You can access the digital files here:

Square image 1800x1800: [https://www.riverdetectives.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Melbourne-Water\\_Seize-it-Snip-it-Bin-it\\_1080x1080-1.jpg](https://www.riverdetectives.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Melbourne-Water_Seize-it-Snip-it-Bin-it_1080x1080-1.jpg)

Portrait banner 1800x1920: [https://www.riverdetectives.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Melbourne-Water\\_Seize-it-Snip-it-Bin-it\\_1080x1920.jpg](https://www.riverdetectives.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Melbourne-Water_Seize-it-Snip-it-Bin-it_1080x1920.jpg)

Landscape banner 3200x1600: [https://www.riverdetectives.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Melbourne-Water\\_Seize-it-Snip-it-Bin-it\\_3200x1600-1-scaled.jpg](https://www.riverdetectives.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Melbourne-Water_Seize-it-Snip-it-Bin-it_3200x1600-1-scaled.jpg)

## Platypus photos



Image 1



Image 2



Image 3



Image 4

You can access the digital files here:

Image 1: <https://www.riverdetectives.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/plat-litter-round-bill-Hobart-2020-Oct-Pete-Walsh.jpg>

Image 2: <https://www.riverdetectives.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/plat-rubber-band-Tucki-Ck-2019-June-Wal-Bailey.jpg>

Image 3: [https://www.riverdetectives.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Dead-Platypus\\_entangled\\_elasticband-Preston\\_00382573\\_004-scaled.jpg](https://www.riverdetectives.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Dead-Platypus_entangled_elasticband-Preston_00382573_004-scaled.jpg)

Image 4: <https://www.riverdetectives.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Plat-litter-Moorabool.jpg>



## Case Study Article

In May this year, a young male platypus was found in distress near the junction of Morses Creek and the Ovens River in Bright, Victoria. The young platypus remained in shallow water, scratching repeatedly under its neck. Although passers-by noticed the unusual behaviour over several days, tragically, no one realised the animal was in serious trouble until it was too late.

The platypus was eventually captured by Wildlife rescuer Chris Lehmann from Reach Out Wildlife and transported to Alpine Animal Hospital in Porepunkah, where it was discovered a hair tie was deeply embedded around the animal's neck and behind its front leg.

Hair ties can become entangled around platypuses when they are swimming or foraging for food underwater. A young platypus may easily mistake a hair tie or litter item for prey and become entangled. Unable to grip the litter item with its paddle-like front feet, a platypus will use its back feet to try to remove the item, often dragging it further along its body.

By the time the young platypus was rescued, the hair tie had cut deeply into the animal's skin, causing severe pain. Each time the platypus moved, the hair tie would have cut deeper into its skin, eventually causing so much pain that the platypus could no longer move. Unable feed due to its injuries, the young male platypus was close to starvation by the time he was rescued.

After urgent consultation with Healesville Sanctuary, the platypus was transferred to their wildlife hospital for specialist veterinary care. Sadly, despite receiving the best possible treatment, he was too weak to survive, and passed away a few hours into surgery.

This tragedy highlights the devastating impacts of **loopy litter**. Simple items like hair ties, rubber bands, plastic rings, fishing line, string, and twine can be deadly traps for our native species.

Case study photos overleaf.



Image 1



Image 2

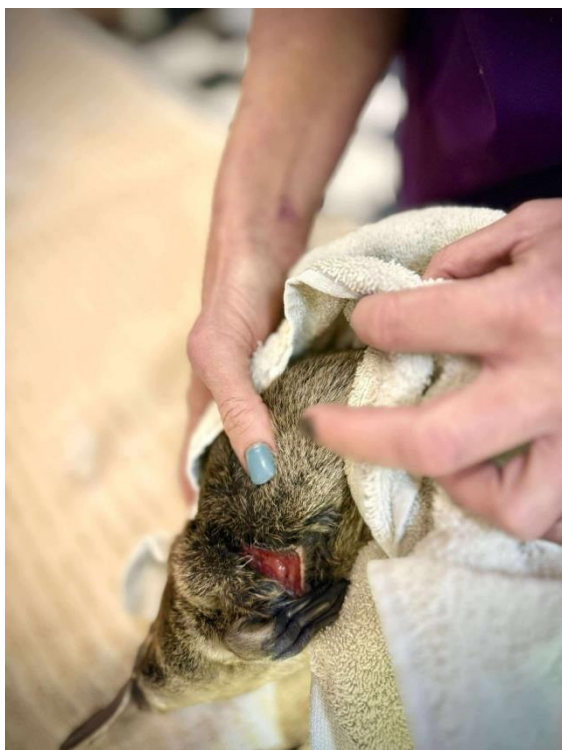


Image 3

You can access the digital files here:

Image 1: <https://www.riverdetectives.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Platypus-Month-Case-study-1.jpg>

Image 2: <https://www.riverdetectives.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Platypus-Month-Case-study-2.jpg>

Image 3: <https://www.riverdetectives.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Platypus-Month-Case-study-3.jpg>

## Campaign evaluation

We'd love to know about anything you get up to during Platypus Month. If you are sharing photos or work samples on a Facebook page, consider using the hashtags #SeizeltSnipItBinIt

#PlatypusMonth2025

Alternatively, you can share your story via email [riverdetectives@nccma.vic.gov.au](mailto:riverdetectives@nccma.vic.gov.au)

### **Thank you for your support**

*Communications Pack and Schools Pack contributing organisations: Melbourne Water, WaterWatch Victoria, Zoos Victoria, Australian Platypus Conservancy, Bacchus Marsh Platypus Alliance, Werribee River Association, North Central CMA, River Detectives, ACT WaterWatch, Merri Paddle. Acknowledgments: Hobart Rivulet Platypus, The Changesmiths and Mass Motion.*



## Appendix 1 – Platypus spotting event outline & talking points

### Event agenda:

- Activity briefing: 5-10 minutes
- Visually observing waterway for platypus for at least 30 minutes at each site. Event attendees can be split into groups to observe more than one site at time.
- Reconvene at meeting spot to discuss any sightings (platypus or other species): 5-10 minutes

### Equipment:

- Binoculars
- First Aid kit
- Water and food
- Mobile phone
- Pen and paper
- Pictures of platypus and Rakali to show event attendees (optional)

### Activity briefing talking points:

Introductions and Acknowledgement of Country

What do platypus look like?

- Dark brown on top, white underneath
- Broad bill and paddle-like tail
- 50cm in length
- Can be very difficult to spot - often won't see a platypus up close in the wild!
- Float low in the water – top of head and back visible, sometimes tail

Rakali & platypus

- Rakali is Australia's native water rat and are often mistaken for platypus
- Both occupy similar environments – rivers, lakes, creeks, however rakali will inhabit coastal environments.
- Very similar in appearance – main distinguishing feature is the tail. Platypus have a broad paddle-like tail. Rakali have a long thin tail with a white tip
- It's important to observe behaviour of the animal to be able to distinguish between platypus and rakali:
  - Rakali are often seen on land, while it is uncommon to see platypus on land.
  - Platypus tend to swim along the surface of the water, with a narrow v-shaped wake.
  - Platypus will dive for about a minute before resurfacing in the same spot. A Rakali will dive and swim below the water surface, resurfacing further away.

#### When to look

- Platypus are nocturnal – best to look for them at dawn and dusk when there is enough light to see them exiting or entering their burrows
- Active periods:
  - Late Summer to Autumn is when juveniles are leaving their burrows
  - Spring during the species mating season, ideally September up until first week of October
- Females will enter burrows within first two weeks of October (activity dies down).

#### Today's activity

- Will be observing platypus at each site for at least 30 minutes. Explanation of site locations
- Important to be quiet and stand back from the river bank. Children should be supervised by an adult at all times.
- If you see a platypus, try to take a photo or video. Note down the time, your location (using google maps or a GPS), the number of platypuses you observed and any behaviour or field notes. Hand this information back to your event leader at the end of the event to be uploaded to PlatypusSPOT.