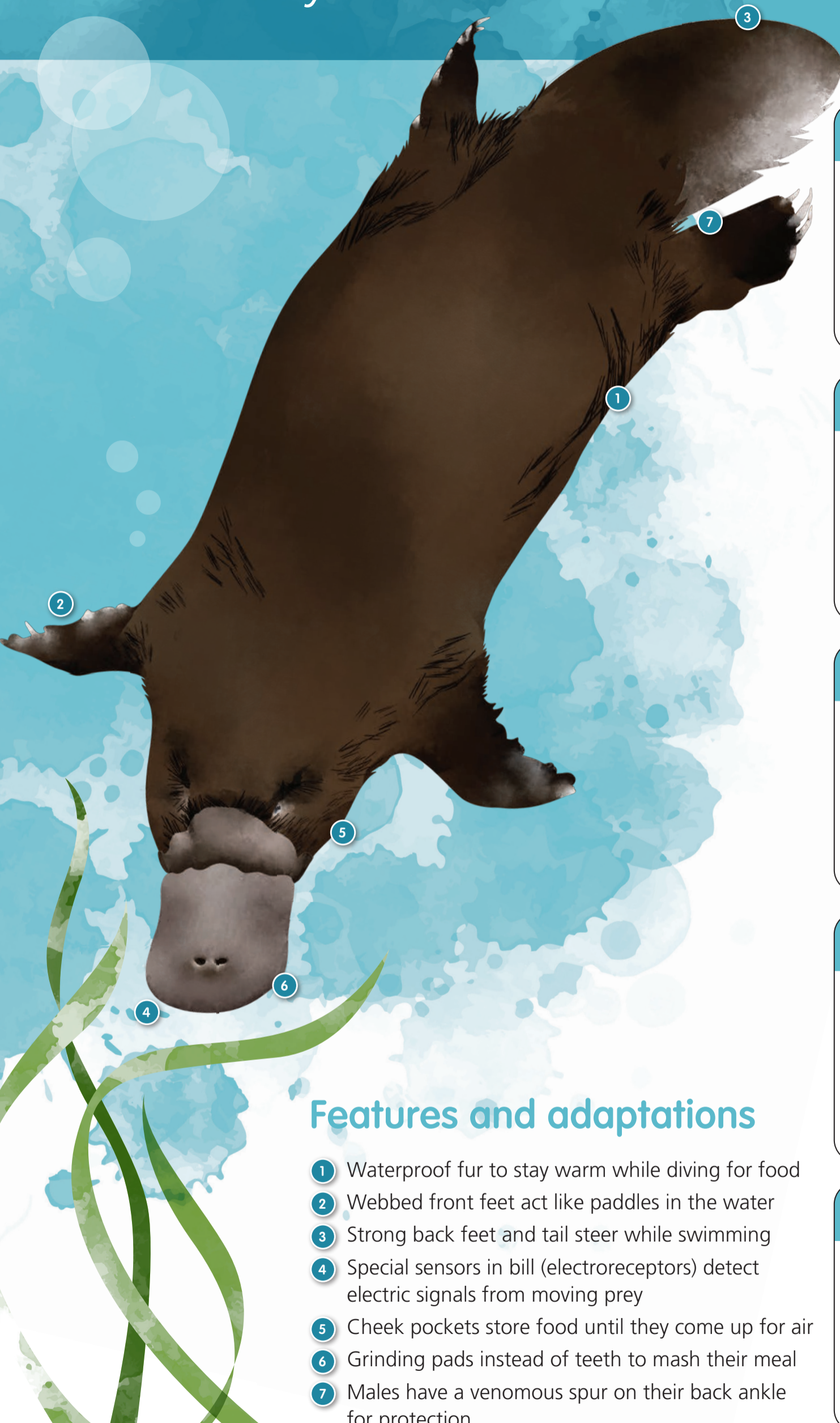


# Platypus

## *Ornithorhynchus anatinus*



### Features and adaptations

- 1 Waterproof fur to stay warm while diving for food
- 2 Webbed front feet act like paddles in the water
- 3 Strong back feet and tail steer while swimming
- 4 Special sensors in bill (electroreceptors) detect electric signals from moving prey
- 5 Cheek pockets store food until they come up for air
- 6 Grinding pads instead of teeth to mash their meal
- 7 Males have a venomous spur on their back ankle for protection

### Habitat



Platypus live in Victoria's freshwater rivers, creeks and lakes. They prefer waterways with gravelly or stony bottoms because they make homes for prey. Platypus love places with natural, earthy banks and lots of plant cover. These banks make it easy to build burrows for shelter during the day. They don't always use the same burrow, and build special ones for nesting with their babies.

### Diet



These nocturnal carnivores feed underwater. They hold their breath, close their eyes and dive to the bottom for up to two minutes. Platypus forage for prey in the sand and dirt, and under stones and logs. Electroreceptors on their bill detect signals when insects, worms and tiny shrimp wriggle in the water. Platypus store their snacks in their cheeks and grind them up when they resurface.

### Life stages



Platypus are monotremes, or mammals that lay eggs. They mate in late winter to early spring. Females incubate one to three eggs in a burrow for about 10 days. Hatched young spend up to four months in the burrow. They suckle milk from skin on their mum's belly, not from a teat. Young leave the nest in summer and learn to swim on their own. Platypus mature after two years and can live for 20 years.

### Threats

**VULNERABLE**

Platypus are environmental indicators. This means their absence tells us when waterways are unhealthy. When humans allow chemicals like pesticides to drain into waterways, it kills platypus' food. Humans can change their habitat by removing plants, adding concrete and building weirs. This makes burrowing and foraging difficult. Platypus can also become tangled in litter like fishing line.

### Conservation



Platypus are shy, so experts use forensic science to find their DNA in waterways. This evidence is used to track and monitor the animals. Rangers strengthen waterway banks and keep water healthy by planting native shrubs and removing litter. We can all help by walking our dogs on leashes and picking up rubbish. It's important to remember that anything we put down the drain can end up in platypus habitat.

