



# ACT STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT REPORT 2011

## SUSTAINABILITY STORIES

### 'Platypus Count' keeps an eye on water



Melody Serena, Australia  
Platypus Conservancy Biologist  
(Photo courtesy ESDD)



Platypus Walk at Dawn in  
Queanbeyan (Photo courtesy  
of ESDD)

*Platypus Count* is a great way to become involved in environmental monitoring and education. The scheme encourages community advocacy for aquatic habitat protection and fosters a commitment to environmental stewardship. In the ACT, the success of *Platypus Count* has had the positive effect of increasing community interest in water quality monitoring, an important activity in protecting platypus habitat.

The Program encourages people to come along on free platypus spotting walks accompanied by knowledgeable guides who provide information on platypus behaviour and habitat. They can also attend expert-led seminars on platypus biology and monitoring or train to become a volunteer with *Platypus Count*. At this stage, data collected by volunteers is managed with the *Australia Platypus Conservancy*.

*Platypus Count* is a joint venture between *Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch* and the *Australian Platypus Conservancy* and funded through *Caring for Country* grants. It was created to help the Conservancy gather comparative data, but also because the *Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch* wanted to offer volunteers and community a more casual and family friendly monitoring project.

A strong community interest in the scheme has resulted in significant environmental benefits for one of our most charismatic native animals and an increased awareness of the harmful effects of littering and illegal fishing practices on them. In the Queanbeyan area, *Platypus Count* has gathered new information about how the platypus responds to floods.

Another key benefit of the initiative has been increased community water quality monitoring along with a passive 'always there' approach in habitat management. It has also mobilised the Queanbeyan council to write its river management plan with an eye towards platypus protection and habitat development.

The ACT region is extremely lucky to benefit from good water quality creating suitable habitats for platypus. *Platypus Count* is helping to spread the word to ensure habitats continue to be protected for future generations.

*Platypus Count* is supported by people of all ages and continues its work building environmental commitment in children. In the future, it hopes to expand into the *Snowy Catchment Management Authority*.

For more information see the Molonglo Water watch website,  
[http://www.molonglocatchment.com.au/molonglo\\_waterwatch.htm](http://www.molonglocatchment.com.au/molonglo_waterwatch.htm)

