

## PLATYPUS MONTH AUGUST 2023

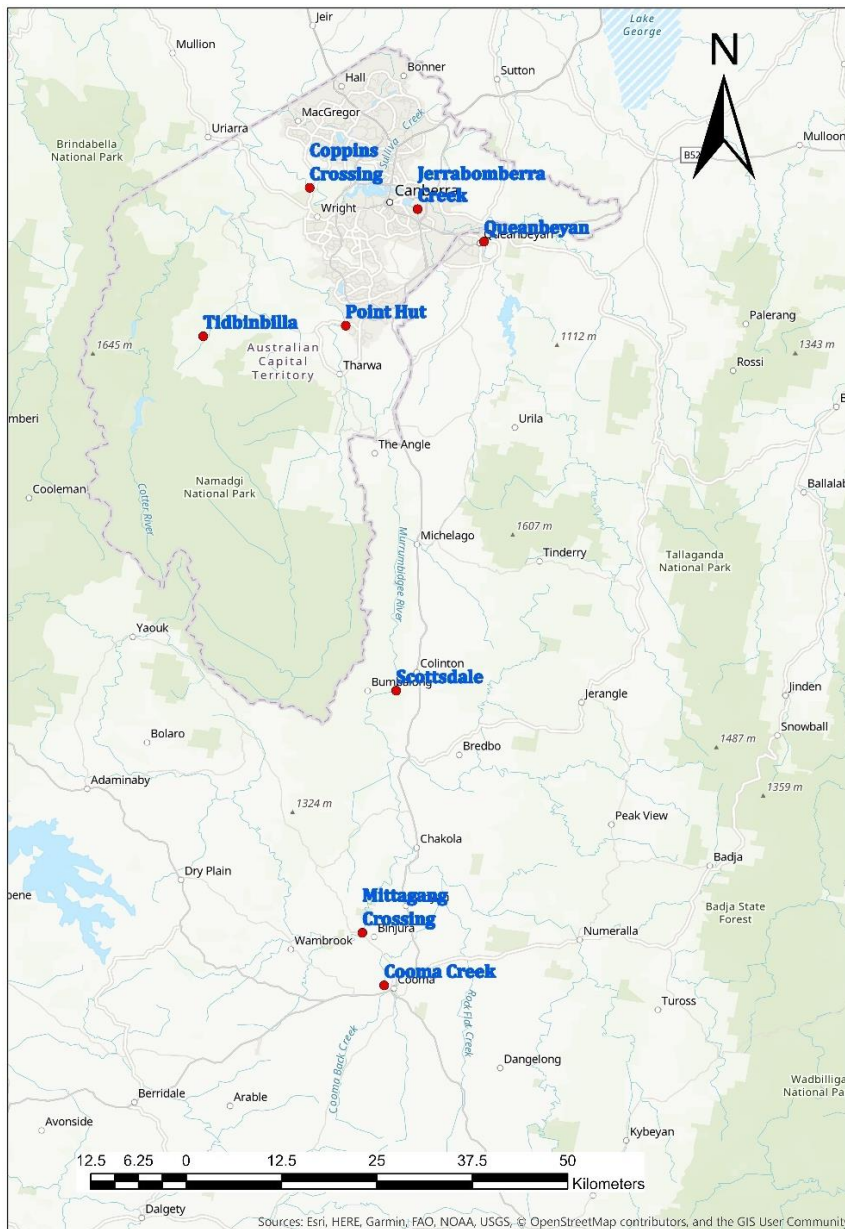
*Platypus Month surveys are conducted on Ngunnawal and Ngarigo country. Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch acknowledges the continued connection that the traditional owners have to these lands and waterways.*

Platypus Month in August 2023 was a resounding success. Putting the disruptions of COVID behind us, this was the third year that we were able to conduct our full complement of 34 group surveys (17 at dawn and 17 at dusk) at 8 sites across the Upper Murrumbidgee region. Continuing to run surveys of this scale and effort, consistently over many years, is the best way to collect robust and reliable data and build up a picture of platypus and rakali population patterns in our region.



Platypus in the Queanbeyan River – Photo Credit Simone Letheby

More than 200 volunteers enjoyed the ideal conditions for spotting platypus and rakali throughout the month, with crisp, still mornings and calm, clear evenings for most surveys. Platypus numbers were slightly higher than in 2022, with **a total of 23 individual platypus detected** across all 8 survey sites. We were particularly happy to record a platypus at Jerrabomberra Creek this year, after the rain and high flows led to no detections there last August. The Queanbeyan River, Molonglo River below Coppins Crossing, and Murrumbidgee River at Mittagang Crossing all recorded one or two more platypus than in 2022.



**Map 1:** 34 group surveys were conducted at eight sites across the ACT region in August 2023.



A Queanbeyan River Platypus Grooming – Photo Credit Simone Letheby

**The number of rakali jumped up to 16 this year**, with especially busy rakali activity recorded at Jerrabomberra Creek which saw 7 individuals. Rakali continued their positive trend in the Cooma Creek, up one from 2022, and the Queanbeyan River also recorded one of its better rakali results, with 3 individuals sighted.



Rakali in the Queanbeyan River – Photo Credit Simone Letheby

Scottsdale Bush Heritage Reserve recorded no rakali this year, and only 2 platypus, the lowest number for this site since 2015. Survey participants at Scottsdale noted that a lot of sand has recently built up in the main pool along this stretch of river, making the pool much shallower than in previous years. All the platypus sightings at Scottsdale were from downstream of this pool, where the riverbed is deeper and still rocky.

**Table 1:** Number of Rakali and Platypus detected during surveys in 2023 (2022 numbers in brackets)

Location	Surveys	Number of individual Rakali	Number of individual Platypus
Molonglo River below Coppins Crossing	4	1 (2)	3 (2)
Jerrabomberra Creek within Nature Reserve	4	7 (2)	1 (0)
The Sanctuary, Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve	4	1 (1)	7 (7)
Queanbeyan River, Queanbeyan	4	3 (1)	4 (2)
Murrumbidgee River, Point Hut Crossing	4	1 (1)	3 (4)
Murrumbidgee River, Scottsdale Bush Heritage Reserve	6	0 (2)	2 (4)
Murrumbidgee River, Mittagang Crossing (Near Cooma)	4	1 (0)	3 (1)
Cooma Creek, Cooma	4	2 (1)	1 (1)
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>16 (10)</b>	<b>23 (21)</b>



A more detailed breakdown of the numbers from this year, along with comparisons to previous years' surveys, is available online at the [Platypus Month Data Dashboard](#). And remember you can record any platypus or rakali sightings in the ACT region on the [Platy and Ratty Portal](#), year round.

If you are keen to do even more platypus data collecting between now and next August, we have set up some sites on the Australian Platypus Conservancy's (APC) [Australian Platypus Monitoring Network](#) page (go to 'View Findings' to see the sites). The sites overlap with our survey areas and are aimed at gaining a better understanding of platypus numbers over the course of the year. This activity suits people who would regularly visit these areas, and can look for platypus there once or twice a week for around ten minutes at a time. The more people that sign up to a site the better, as this will increase the number of data points for that site and improve confidence in the data. Get in touch with us at [Waterwatch](#) if you think you may be interested, and we will be happy to talk through what is involved.



Platypus – Photo Credit Simone Letheby

Waterwatch receives funding from the ACT Government, and from Icon Water who support the implementation of the program in the Cooma-Monaro region. Many thanks to both these funding sources that enable Waterwatch to monitor platypus on a broad, catchment scale.

Thanks also to staff at Scottsdale Bush Heritage Reserve and at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve who collaborated with Waterwatch to conduct 10 of the 34 group surveys. This adds valuable data to the mix that Waterwatch would not otherwise have the capacity to collect. And a huge thank you to the volunteers – we hope to see you again in 2024!