The **platypus** (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*) is a [semi-aquatic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semi-aquatic_mammal) [mammal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mammal) [endemic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Endemic_(ecology)) to [eastern Australia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_states_of_Australia), including [Tasmania](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tasmania). Together with the four species of [echidna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Echidna), it is one of the five extant species of [monotremes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monotreme), the only mammals that lay [eggs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egg_(biology)) instead of giving birth to live young. It is the sole living representative of its [family](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Family_(biology)) ([Ornithorhynchidae](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ornithorhynchidae)) and[genus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genus) (*Ornithorhynchus*), though a number of [related species](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fossil_Monotremes) have been found in the fossil record.

The unusual appearance of this egg-laying, [venomous](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venom), [duck](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duck)-billed, [beaver](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beaver)-tailed, [otter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otter)-footed mammal baffled European naturalists when they first encountered it, with some considering it an elaborate fraud. It is one of the few [venomous mammals](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venomous_mammals), the male platypus having a spur on the hind foot that delivers a venom capable of causing severe pain to humans. The unique features of the platypus make it an important subject in the study of evolutionary biology and a recognisable and iconic symbol of [Australia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australia); it has appeared as a mascot at national events and is featured on the [reverse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Obverse_and_reverse) of the [Australian 20 cent coin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_20_cent_coin). The platypus is the animal emblem of the state of [New South Wales](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_South_Wales).[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Platypus#cite_note-2)

Until the early 20th century, it was hunted for its fur, but it is now protected throughout its range. Although captive breeding programmes have had only limited success and the platypus is vulnerable to the effects of pollution, it is not under any immediate threat.