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THE STRANGE PLATYPUS

by Lanny & Marilyn Johnson

One of the strangest animals God created has to be the platypus, or duckbill ... an animal so weird that at one time people didn't believe it was real. When British scientists first saw a stuffed platypus in 1799, they thought it was a joke!

The platypus is strange, but it is not a joke. The duckbill platypus has a bill like a duck, a tail like a beaver, is covered with soft, heavy fur, and has webbed feet. The male platypus has poisonous spurs on its hind legs. The female lays eggs, but feeds her babies with milk! The duckbill may seem odd, but it really is a creature full of wonderful design.

The platypus lives by streams, rivers, and ponds in eastern Australia and Tasmania. This two-foot-long mammal (about the size of a pet cat) lives both on land and in the water. God made its nostrils near the end of a soft, rubbery bill so that it can stay under water and breathe with only the tip of the bill showing. When the platypus is underwater, it has a fold of skin that closes over its eyes (and ears which are inside the head). Using its tail as a rudder, it swims

close to the stream bottom poking and prodding in the mud with his bill, hunting for hidden crayfish, worms, and water insects. The bill has special sensors that can "feel" small electrical signals that these hidden creatures give off! God also gave the platypus cheek pouches to store food in while it is hunting underwater.

God created the platypus with two layers of fur. The first is short and thick -- it keeps the duckbill's skin dry and warm. The second is longer and is the layer of fur that gets wet.

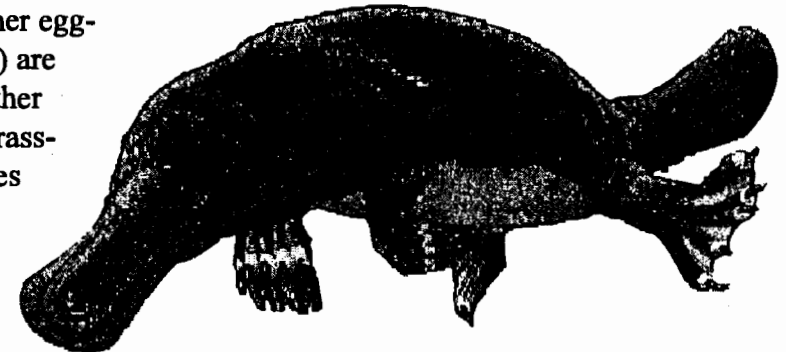
The feet of the duckbill are webbed for swimming. When it walks on land, the webs of the front feet fold under the foot and uncover the claws. The platypus uses its claws to dig a burrow (nest) deep in a mud-bank. It has a curious lizard-like walk because God made its legs stick out to the side of the body.

Amazingly, this odd little mammal hatches from an egg rather than being born alive as other mammals. The world's only other egg-laying mammals (called monotremes) are echidnas, or spiny anteaters. The mother platypus usually lays two eggs in a grass-lined nest in her burrow. She incubates (keeps warm) the eggs in the fur between her belly and tail. After 10 to 12 days the babies break their way out of the egg with an egg tooth (which later falls out). The tiny baby platypus (called a puggle) laps up its mother's milk that oozes from tiny openings onto hair on her belly.

The male platypus is the world's only poisonous furred creature. Near his thighs, he has poison glands (sacks). Long tubes go from these

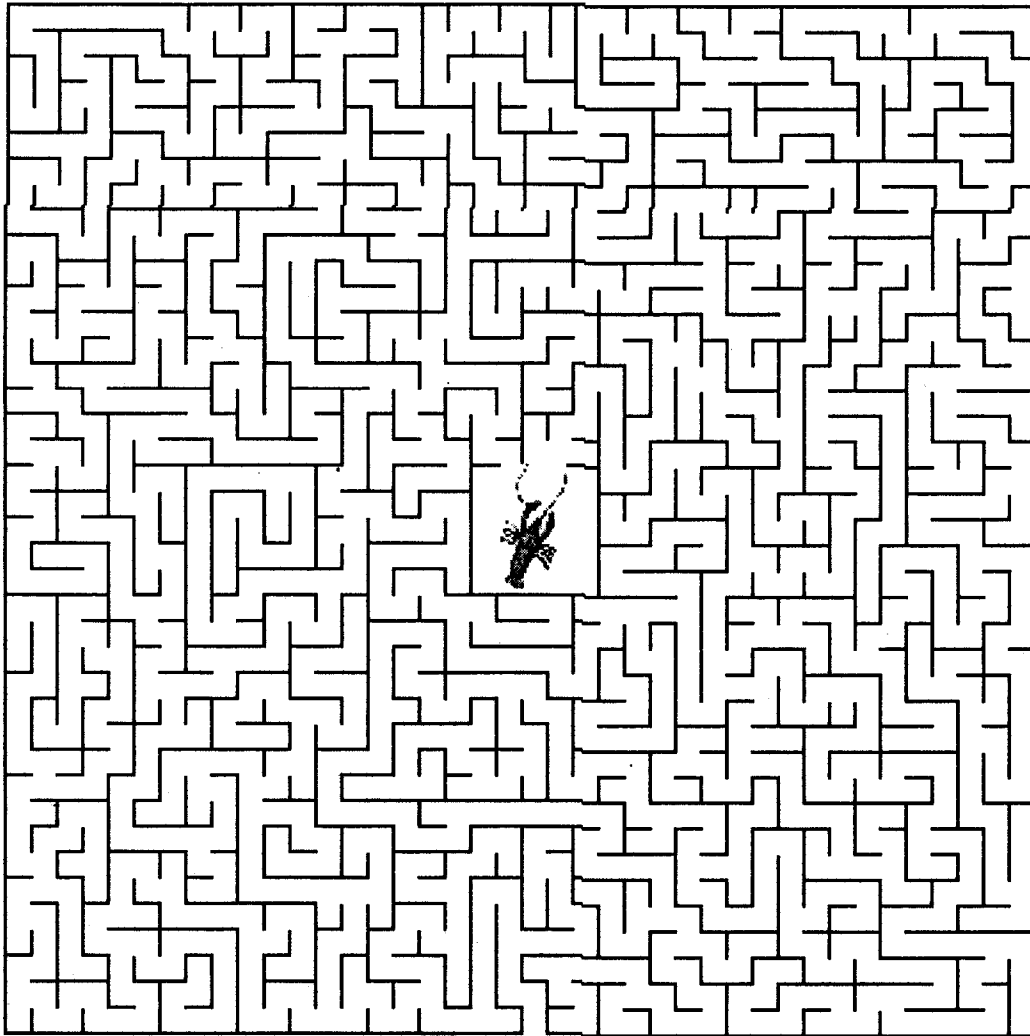
glands to a hollow spur (claw) on the hind legs. The poison is very much like that of a poisonous snake ... powerful enough to make people sick or kill a dog.

Some people say that God created the platypus just to confuse people who believe in evolution. I don't know if that is the reason, but I do know that when I used to believe in evolution, the platypus sure puzzled me. What animal did he come from? No fossils have ever been found that show the platypus evolved from mammals, reptiles, or birds. Another thing that puzzled me: What kind of an animal is he changing into? Only a few platypus fossils have been found. They show that the platypus is the same today as it was in the past. It seems that platypuses didn't come from any other animals ... they came from other platypuses that God created!

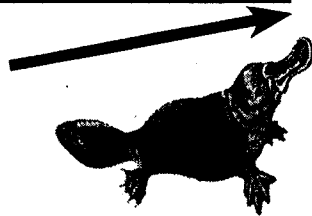


And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

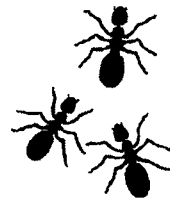
Genesis 1:25



THE PLATYPUS IS HUNGRY. HELP HIM FIND THE CRAWDAD.

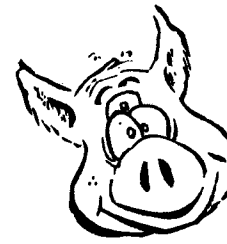


A. What's smaller than an ant's mouth?



ANSWERS

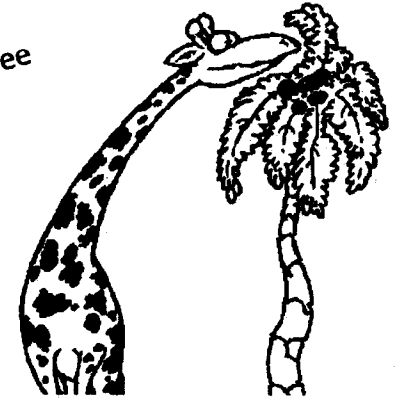
- A. Anything it puts in it.
- B. A pill
- C. Baby giraffes.
- D. Any dog, buildings can't jump!
- E. "Put it on my bill!"
- F. Take away his credit card.



B. What do you call a pig with three eyes?



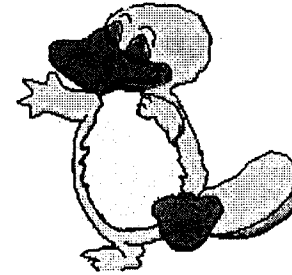
C. What do giraffes have that no other animals have?



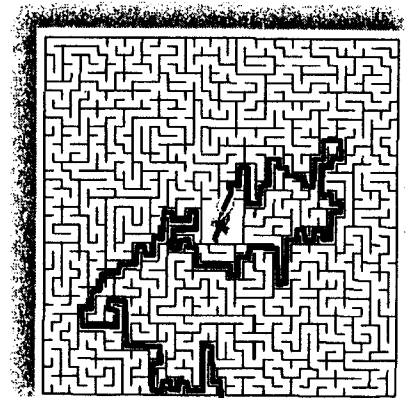
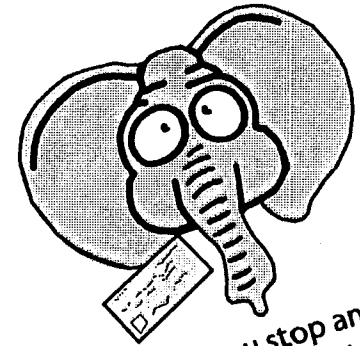
D. What kind of dog can jump higher than a building?



E. What did the platypus say when she bought a lipstick?



F. How do you stop an elephant from charging?



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