
Platypus Month 2026 Communication Pack



CARE FOR DOGS • CARE FOR WILDLIFE • CARE FOR COUNTRY

Developed in partnership by Melbourne Water, North Central Catchment Management Authority, River Detectives, WaterWatch Victoria, Nillumbik Shire Council, Zoos Victoria, RMIT University, Werribee River Association, Bacchus Marsh Platypus Alliance, Merri Paddle & NatureWest

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Purpose and background

This Communication Pack is designed to help you promote Platypus Month within your community. This year's 'Take the Lead for Platypus' campaign encourages dog owners to leash dogs around waterways to protect platypus.

[Research](#) has found dog-related attacks are one of the leading causes of platypus deaths in Victoria. We also know the presence of dogs can disturb wildlife, with repeated disturbance interfering with vital behaviours such as feeding, resting and breeding. Riparian corridors provide important habitat to many native species, therefore encouraging dog owners to leash dogs around waterways will benefit wildlife beyond the platypus.

This year's Platypus Month will be celebrated in October to align with Victorian school's term 4 and daylight savings. A [Platypus Month Schools Pack](#) is available on the River Detectives website that includes learning activities for students.

While this Communication Pack is tailored for a Victorian audience, organisations in other states and territories may find its content useful for promoting platypus conservation messages.

How to use this pack

Bring the 'Take the Lead for Platypus' campaign alive in your community this October by using the resources in this pack. Campaign graphics, animation, photos and suggested copy are included to help you spread the message via social media, newsletters, blogs and web content. Activity outlines include practical actions and event ideas for organisations and community groups to implement during October.

What's included:

- Visual assets – campaign graphics, animations and photos
- 3 x social media posts
- Short form copy – suitable for newsletters, websites
- Long form copy – suitable for newsletters, websites, blogs
- Activity outlines – Dogs' breakfast event, platypus spotting event, develop a flyer for your local community
- Campaign key messages and proof points

Tips for success:

- Time all campaign communications and activities for **October** to align with other organisations promoting the campaign.
- Alert your Communications Team **early** about Platypus Month and the October campaign. Make sure your organisation has plenty of time to include the campaign in communication calendars or schedules.
- Adapt the content included in this Communication Pack for your community. You could tweak the suggested copy or include information about relevant platypus projects happening in your region.
- Share this Communication Pack with other organisation that may wish to implement the campaign.



Remember if you find a platypus in distress, please contact Wildlife Victoria:

24/7 phone line: (03) 8400 7300

Online form: <https://www.wildlifelifevictoria.org.au/report-a-wildlife-emergency>

Campaign evaluation and reporting

Help us evaluate the 'Take the Lead for Platypus' campaign and improve future Platypus Month initiatives. While promoting the campaign, please capture and record the following metrics:

- Social media – number of posts, post engagements and reach.
- Number of newsletter articles and mailing list subscribers.
- Number of website or blog articles and associated page views.
- Number of community events and event attendees.
- Evidence of changes in awareness or behaviour in your community as a result of the 'Take the Lead for Platypus' campaign.

Please complete the campaign reporting form at the end of Platypus Month.



Access campaign reporting form – <https://forms.office.com/r/KDG17GvYVj>

Visual assets

Click the graphic, animation and photo options below to download the files.

Campaign graphics and animations

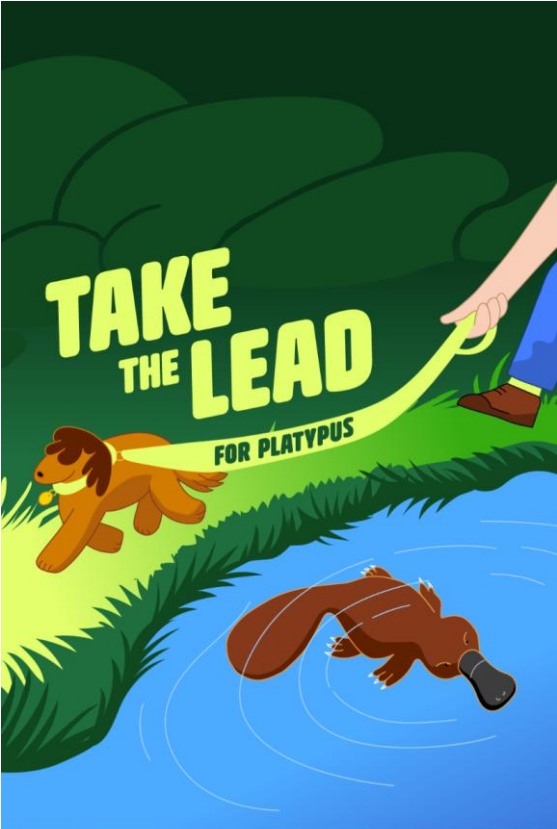


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[Download 1080 x 1080px graphic](#)

[Download 1080 x 1080px animated graphic](#)

Best for Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn **posts**



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[Download 1080 x 1920px graphic](#)

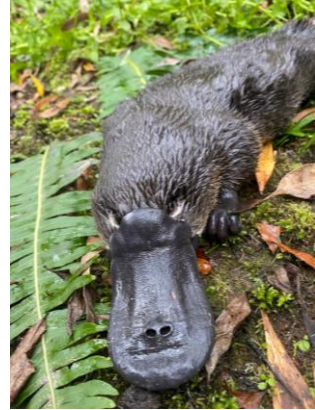
[Download 1080 x 1920px animated graphic](#)

Best for Facebook and Instagram **story posts**

Images



[Download image 1. Credit: Arthur Rylah Institute – Jarod Lyon](#)



[Download image 2. Credit: Arthur Rylah Institute](#)



[Download image 3. Credit: Arthur Rylah Institute – Peter Menkhorst](#)



[Download image 4. Credit: Ian Wilson](#)

Please include image credits when using photos.

Social media posts

Accompany each social media post with the visual assets listed in the previous section. We recommend using one of the 'Take the Lead for Platypus' campaign graphics or animations in each post to amplify the message. Images should be used as secondary visual assets.

Remember to use the **#TakeTheLeadForPlatypus** and **#PlatypusMonth2026** hashtags in your posts.

Post 1

Did you know platypuses live in waterways across most of Victoria? Play a part in their protection by leashing your dog around creeks, rivers and lakes 🐶

Dog attacks are one of the leading causes of platypus deaths in Victoria. Even a dog's presence can disturb wildlife from important behaviours like feeding, resting and breeding.

Take the Lead and join the many Victorians protecting platypus:

🐶 Leash your dog around rivers, creeks and lakes.

🐶 Choose walking routes that allow dogs when visiting waterways with your pooch. Check out Park Victoria's [A-Z guide for dog friendly walking trails](#).

🐶 Learn more: <https://www.vic.waterwatch.org.au/project/take-the-lead-for-platypus-platypus-month-2026>

#TakeTheLeadForPlatypus #PlatypusMonth2026



Tip:

We recommend using one of the animated graphics with this post, especially if it's your first social media post for the campaign. Consider adding a positive, upbeat background tune to increase engagement.

Post 2

Creeks and rivers are great places to walk your dog. But they are also prime habitat for snakes and paralysis ticks, which pose serious risks to pets.

 Victoria is home to 27 snake species, most of them venomous, making on-leash walks the safer choice!

Keep dogs and platypus safe when visiting waterways:

 Leash your dog around rivers, creeks and lakes.

 Choose walking routes that allow dogs when visiting waterways with your pooch. Check out Park Victoria's [A-Z guide for dog friendly walking trails](#).

 Learn more: <https://www.vic.waterwatch.org.au/project/take-the-lead-for-platypus-platypus-month-2026>

#TakeTheLeadForPlatypus #PlatypusMonth2026

Post 3

We love spotting platypus in our waterways. You may be surprised to learn that platypus live in your local creek 

But platypus numbers are declining across Australia and the species is now threatened in Victoria.

You can help protect them:

 Visit platypusspot.org to find out if platypus live in your local creek and share your platypus sightings.

 Take the Lead for Platypus! Leash your dog around waterways to keep everyone safe. Learn more: <https://www.vic.waterwatch.org.au/project/take-the-lead-for-platypus-platypus-month-2026>

#TakeTheLeadForPlatypus #PlatypusMonth2026

Short form copy

Suitable for newsletters and websites to introduce the campaign. Consider accompanying the copy with the [1080 x 1080px campaign graphic](#).

Title:

Take the Lead for Platypus this October

Copy:

Platypus live in waterways across Victoria, including many urban creeks and rivers. But they're under threat, with dog attacks one of the leading causes of platypus deaths in Victoria.

Off-leash dogs can disturb, injure and kill platypuses. Even a dog's presence can make platypus feel unsafe, disrupting their feeding, resting and breeding. Play a part in their protection by leashing your dog around waterways.

Leashing your dog protects them too. Waterways are prime habitat for snakes and paralysis ticks which pose serious risks to pets. Victoria is home to 27 snake species, most of them venomous, making on-leash walks the safer choice.

Most Victorians support leashing to protect wildlife – Join them:

- Leash your dog around rivers, creeks and lakes.
- Choose walking routes that allow dogs when visiting waterways with your pooch. Check out Park Victoria's [A-Z guide for dog friendly walking trails](#).
- Visit platypusspot.org to learn where platypus live and share your platypus sightings.
- Learn more: <https://www.vic.waterwatch.org.au/project/take-the-lead-for-platypus-platypus-month-2026>

Long form copy

Suitable for newsletters, websites and blogs as a feature article to deepen reader's understanding of the campaign. Consider accompanying the copy with the [1080 x 1080px campaign graphic](#) and images listed previously (or your own!).

Title:

Take the Lead for Platypus this October

Copy:

Did you know platypuses live in waterways across most of Victoria? They've been recorded in 24 of Victoria's 27 river basins, and in many of Melbourne's catchments.

Despite their wide distribution, platypuses are a threatened species in Victoria, listed as *vulnerable*. One of the biggest and most preventable threats they face is dog attack.

Research shows dog attacks are one of the leading causes of platypus deaths in Victoria, and even the presence of dogs can disturb and stress platypuses.

This October, we're encouraging everyone to **Take the Lead for Platypus**, by leashing dogs around waterways.

Why it matters

Off-leash or poorly controlled dogs can disturb, injure and kill a platypus. Even playful dogs can stress wildlife, interrupting feeding, resting and breeding. An off-leash dog can cause harm well after the walk has ended – their scent and droppings scare smaller animals, making habitats feel unsafe.

Dr Jessica Thomas, Healesville Sanctuary Platypus Specialist, has observed a rise in platypus patients coming through the wildlife hospital with injuries consistent with dog attacks.

“When walking near waterways, keeping your dog on a lead is one of the simplest ways to protect platypuses. Dogs can move quickly in the shallows and may injure or kill a platypus before their owner even realises what has happened. Dogs on lead keeps everyone safe”

Leashing your dog protects them too. Waterways are prime habitat for snakes and paralysis ticks which pose serious risks to pets. Victoria is home to 27 snake species, most of them venomous, making on-leash walks the safer choice.

Most Victorian's support leashing to protect wildlife

Protecting wildlife is important to Victorians and most people expect dog owners to do the right thing.

In Victoria there is strong support for wildlife protection among dog owners. Research shows nearly three-quarters (73%) of Victorians agree that dogs should be leashed near wildlife habitat and most dog owners (70%) support leashing rules to protect threatened species, like platypus.

Join the many Victorians already acting to protect platypus:

1. Leash your dog around rivers, creeks and lakes.
2. Choose walking routes that allow dogs when visiting waterways with your pooch. Check out Park Victoria's [A-Z guide for dog friendly walking trails](#).
3. If you find a platypus in distress, please contact Wildlife Victoria:

24/7 phone line: (03) 8400 7300

Online form: <https://www.wildlifevictoria.org.au/report-a-wildlife-emergency>

4. Learn more: <https://www.vic.waterwatch.org.au/project/take-the-lead-for-platypus-platypus-month-2026>

Platypus could be living in your local waterway!

Platypus are mostly active at night and difficult to spot. Even if you've never seen one, they could be living in your local creek.

Try spotting a platypus! Dawn and dusk are the best time to view these incredible animals. Locate a stretch of river where platypus are likely to live – waterways with steep, vegetated banks, pebbly riverbeds and good flowing water are ideal. Find a quiet spot with a view of the river, settle in and be patient. Visit platypusspot.org to learn where platypus live and share your platypus sightings.

Activity outlines for agency staff and volunteer leaders

These suggested events and activities will help bring the campaign to life during Platypus Month (October).

Activity 1. Host a dogs' breakfast or free coffee event



Dogs' breakfast events are a wonderful way to engage and educate dog owners. Pictured dog owners enjoying a coffee at a dogs' breakfast event along Jacksons Creek, Sunbury. Supplied by Melbourne Water, image credit Sharon Blance – Image workshop.

Consider visiting a local dog park, reserve or public park frequented by dog walkers, nearby a [known platypus population](#) to help spread the word about protecting platypus and pooches.

Promoting it in the lead up will help attract participants. You could put up a poster on site and promote on social media, or in your local newspaper or newsletter. Consider using the campaign graphics, copy and key messages (Appendix 1) in this pack in your promotional material.

Arrange for a coffee van to come along to offer free coffee (and puppy-chino!) for each attendee.

If the budget allows, you could even bring muffins or arrange a Lions Club or similar to cook a BBQ.

You could partner with a dog obedience club or local dog trainer to give a dog obedience demonstration or your council's local laws team to promote responsible dog ownership at the event.

You could invite guest speakers to talk on locally relevant projects or activities.

Take some flyers (see *activity 3 below to help prepare one*) to hand out and deliver a talk with interested dog owners.



Consider partnering with a local dog obedience club to provide a dog obedience demonstration or activity during the event. Supplied by Melbourne Water, image credit Sharon Blance – Image workshop.

Example event outline & talking points

Sample agenda for a 60-minute event:

10 minutes – Welcome and introductions, Acknowledgement of Country, safety briefing.

15 minutes – Deliver a talk on keeping platypus and dogs safe, using the campaign messaging (Appendix 1).

20 minutes – Guest speaker on a relevant local platypus or riparian project or a dog obedience demonstration.

15 minutes – Questions, discussion, socialising over a cuppa and puppy-chino.

Activity 2. Platypus spotting event

Consider holding a platypus spotting event in your region. This is always a drawcard and a great time to talk about protecting platypus and pooches. However, for this event we recommend that attendees do not bring along their dogs.

Check out these [spotting hints](#) from Australian Platypus Conservancy. The page provides detailed advice about where and when to look, and what to look for.

The Australian Conservation Foundation's [Platy-Project Toolkit](#) contains everything you need to organise a spotting event, including identifying a location.

Be sure to enter platypus data into the [PlatypusSPOT](#) platform. Every observation helps scientists better understand where platypuses live and how to protect them.



Remember, if you find a platypus in distress, please contact Wildlife Victoria:

24/7 phone line: (03) 8400 7300

Online form: <https://www.wildlifevictoria.org.au/report-a-wildlife-emergency>



*Choose elevated spots that provide a full view of the waterway to look for platypus.
Supplied by Melbourne Water, image credit Charlotte Sterrett.*

Example event outline & talking points

Sample agenda for a 60-minute event:

5 minutes - Welcome and introductions, Acknowledgement of Country.

5 minutes - A short talk on responsible dog ownership and keeping dogs on leads around waterways. Use the campaign key messaging to formulate your talking points (Appendix 1).

10 minutes – Activity explanation and safety briefing.

30 minutes - Visually observing waterway for platypus for at least 30 minutes. Attendees can be split into groups to observe multiple sites.

10 minutes - Reconvene at meeting spot to discuss any sightings (platypus or other species).

Optional morning tea, breakfast or light supper, depending on available budget and timing of your event.

Don't forget, dawn and dusk are the best time for platy-spotting!

Suggested Equipment:

- First Aid kit
- Binoculars
- Morning tea, breakfast or light supper
- Mobile phone
- Pen and paper
- Pictures of swimming platypus and rakali to show attendees.

Talking points:

What do platypus look like?

- Dark brown on top, white underneath.
- Broad bill and paddle-like tail.
- ~50cm in length.
- Can be very difficult to spot. Float low in the water – often just the top of head and back visible, sometimes the tail.

Rakali & platypus

- Rakali is Australia's native water rat and are often mistaken for platypus.
- Both occupy similar environments – rivers, lakes, creeks, however rakali will also inhabit coastal environments.
- Very similar in appearance – main distinguishing feature is the tail. Platypus have a broad paddle-like tail. Rakali have a long thin tail with a white tip.
- It's important to observe behaviour of the animal to be able to distinguish between them:
 - Rakali are often seen on land, while it is uncommon to see platypus on land.
 - Platypus tend to swim along the surface of the water, with a narrow V-shaped wake.
 - Platypus will dive for about a minute before resurfacing, usually in the same spot.
 - A Rakali will dive and swim below the water surface, resurfacing elsewhere.

Show photo examples of rakali and platypus.

When to look

- Platypus are nocturnal – best to look for them at dawn and dusk when there is enough light to see them exiting or entering their burrows.
- Active periods in Victoria:
 - Late Summer to Autumn, when juveniles are leaving their burrows for the first time.
 - Spring, during the mating season – ideally September and first half of October. Females will begin entering burrows within first two weeks of October to breed. Activity decreases after this point.

Explain activity

- Observing platypus at each site for at least 30 minutes. *Explain locations of sites.*
- Children should be supervised by an adult at all times.
- Important to be very quiet and still and stand back from the water's edge.
- If you see a platypus, try to take a photo or video. Note down the time, your location (using google maps or a GPS), the number of platypuses you observed and any behaviour or field notes.

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- Hand this information back to your event leader at the end of the event to be uploaded to PlatypusSPOT - <https://platypusspot.org/>

Reconvene at the end of the event and discuss any observations. Reiterate the campaign messaging.

Activity 3. Create a flyer specific to your local council area

Prepare a flyer to share with your local community. The following text is suggested as a guide. Feel free to tailor it to your region and get creative. Make it eye catching with some images and QR codes to useful resources, like information on local dog parks and where local platypus populations are located. Use resources like platypusspot.org to find out where platypus live near you.

Please send a copy of your flyer to vicwaterwatchestuarywatch@ccma.vic.gov.au

We'd love to see what you create!

Example flyer:

Take the Lead for Platypus in [ADD YOUR LGA or SHIRE NAME]

Off-leash dogs disturb and threaten platypuses and dog attacks are one of the leading causes of platypus deaths in Victoria.

Even playful dogs can make platypus feel unsafe and disrupt them from feeding, resting and breeding.

Leashing your dog protects them too. Waterways are prime habitat for snakes and paralysis ticks which pose serious risks to pets. Victoria is home to 27 snake species, most of them venomous, making on-leash walks the safer choice!



Join the many Victorians already acting to protect platypus:

- Leash your dog around rivers, creeks and lakes.
- Choose walking routes that allow dogs when visiting waterways with your pooch.
- Spotted a platypus? Record your sighting on <https://platypusspot.org/>

Consider adding a map showing local dog parks, popular dog walking areas or highlight where local platypus populations are.

Appendix 1 – Campaign key messages and proof points

Message 1: Off-leash dogs threaten platypuses.

Off-leash dogs disturb and can attack platypuses. A dog's presence alone can interrupt feeding, resting and breeding, while attacks can cause fatal injuries.

- In Australia, domestic dogs are responsible for more attacks on wildlife than domestic cats (1)
- Research shows predation - primarily by dogs - is the second leading cause of platypus deaths in Victoria (2)
- In 2025, Healesville sanctuary's wildlife hospital received six platypuses that had been attacked by dogs, four of which were presented dead on arrival (3)
- Repeated disturbance from dogs - whether off-leash or not properly controlled - can be fatal for wildlife. Frequent disruption can interfere with feeding and resting, increase stress and reduce energy reserves leaving wildlife more vulnerable to injury or predation (1).
- Platypus are a threatened species in Victoria, listed as 'vulnerable' under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 (4).

Message 2. Keeping dogs on-leash around waterways keeps everyone safe.

Keeping your dog on-leash around waterways protects them from dangers such as snakes and ticks, while reducing risk to other walkers and dogs.

- Victoria is home to 27 species of snakes – almost all are venomous and often found within a few hundred meters of water (5).
- Victoria is home to three species of ticks including the paralysis tick which causes serious and potentially fatal paralysis in dogs. Ticks can be found in bushland and scrub along waterways (6).
- Most dog attacks reported to councils in Australia happen when dogs are off-leash. Leashing your dog keeps you, your dog, and others safe (7).

Message 3. Victorians are counting on you to do the right thing.

Most people expect dog owners to do the right thing to protect platypus and other wildlife around waterways—by keeping dogs on-leash near waterways and respecting areas where dogs are required to be on-lead or aren't permitted.

- Most people (73% of Victorians) expect dogs to be leashed in natural areas, except in designated off-leash areas (8).
- Most dog owners (70%) are supportive of leashing regulations to protect threatened species, like platypus (8).
- Most Victorians (70%) feel that dogs should not be allowed to visit places where there are threatened wildlife (8).

Message 4. Platypus live in many of Victoria's waterways.

Platypus live in many of Victoria's waterways, including urban creeks and rivers. Platypus are shy, nocturnal animals, so encountering one in the wild is a rare and special experience. Even if you haven't spotted one, they could be living in your local waterway.

- Platypus have been detected in 24 of Victoria's 27 river basins and are considered widespread throughout 15 of the basins (9).
- Platypus populations are found in 10 of Melbourne's catchments – Werribee Gorge, Lower Werribee, Jacksons Creek, Upper Deep Creek, Yarra River, Olinda Creek, Monbulk Creek, Cardinia Creek, Tarago/Bunyip Rivers, and Lang Lang River (10).

Calls to action:

1. Leash your dog around waterways.
2. Choose walking routes that allow dogs when visiting waterways with your pooch.
Check out Park Victoria's [A-Z guide for dog friendly walking trails](#).
3. Visit platypusspot.org to learn where platypus live and share your platypus sightings

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