Little did Frank Pierce and Janet Mattiske know, when they found an echidna nursery burrow close to their home early one November, that they would be treated to a totally unique experience over the following months. Frank and Janet live about 33 kms north-east of Melbourne, adjacent to the Yarra river. Their home is on 128 hectares jointly owned by 32 shareholders. Called Round the Bend Conservation Cooperative this area is zoned Special Use - Environmental Living and is a nirvana for local wildlife as it is prohibited for residents to keep dogs, cats or any other domestic or farm animals. The eucalypt woodland with its understorey of native herbs, grasses and shrubs has no fences and echidna sightings are not uncommon; they are frequently seen on hot summer days drinking and bathing in the garden pools.

Frank and Janet's echidna nursery burrow was just four metres from the house, tucked away behind a sleeper wall that retained the upper level of a three-level terraced garden. The echidna Mum, whom Frank and Janet named 'M', would enter the burrow by digging under the sleeper wall from the second level. But M's choice of sites wasn't ideal. Although the gravel surface above the burrow had formed a hard crust it wasn't all that stable and over the weeks there were a number of small cave-ins creating gaping holes into the burrow. It was through one of these holes that Frank and Janet first sighted a juvenile echidna (a puggle). They placed a sheet of chipboard over the hole to protect its inhabitant but more sheets had to be added as more holes appeared and eventually the covering was upgraded to a steel plate.

Frank and Janet set up a watch. They observed M coming back to visit the nursery burrow every 4-5 days. She would take up to an hour to open up the burrow entrance and once inside distinctive 'snuffling' heavy breathing could be heard coming from within presumably a suckling puggle.

Some weeks later, at the end of December, Frank and Janet saw the young echidna outside the burrow being suckled by mum. Eight days on there was M again, suckling her puggle outside the burrow - but on closer inspection they saw that it wasn't the same puggle! And to confirm what their eyes refused to believe they saw the first puggle sheltering about 4 metres away.

M had twins!

continued page 2...
A very rare occurrence indeed. Except for one instance of two eggs being found in a pouch and another of two pouch young there are very few records of more than a single egg being laid by a Short-beaked Echidna let alone twins being raised to maturity.

But these two puggles were not identical twins. The first one, referred to as B1 by the thrilled observers, was small with brown fur and had short, buff coloured, spines with dark tips. Whereas B2 - the second puggle - was bigger and blacker and had more spines that were longer and lighter than B1s.

To identify the echidnas in the future, small coloured plastic rings were attached to their spines. "Our aim was to minimize interference to the echidnas", said Frank. "To enable observation of natural unaffected behaviours". This was the only time the echidnas were handled.

Over the next couple of months the monotreme trio continued to astound their audience by breaking all the rules. Scientists have long observed that young echidnas are abandoned by their mothers once they have had that first suckle outside the burrow. And yet M continued to suckle B1 and B2 up to 60 days after they had 'come out'. This was the first ever documentation of such an event.

B1 and B2 grew fast and became more adventurous with each day, traveling just that little bit further away from the garden. They were not early risers seeming to prefer to sleep in each morning until around 11.30am (daylight saving). Their first activity would be a short 'sun-bath' followed by some active digging and foraging interspersed with an occasional doze under cover. They were active climbers and very curious about their surroundings. But occasionally it all got too much and they wouldn't emerge from their beds for a couple of days.

The echidna is normally a solitary creature and B1 and B2 would go about their business alone and using different shelter sites at night. Although Frank and Janet had observed, earlier on, the pair share one shelter over several nights. But these serious little creatures never showed any signs of the play behavior you see amongst most baby mammals. "Passive tolerance", was how Frank and Janet described B1 and B2's relationship.

Over the next two months M would come and go. Sometimes she would forage for hours in the bush around the house and then seemed to suddenly decide it was time to check on her kids and would systematically check the shelters they had used on her previous visit. If they weren't there she would proceed, with great purpose, as if picking up on their scent, until she found one of them. When M approached one of the youngsters it appeared to freeze. M would prod it with her nose until it realised there was a meal in the offing, and started feeding. The feeding would usually take about 40 minutes after which M would rest for about 15 and then head off.
After a feed the youngsters would sometimes get a real burst of energy and rush about foraging but at other times they would head for bed to put their feet up.

Young echidnas feed by sucking milk from one of two milk patches called areolae located inside the pouch – there are no teats. The milk is so rich in fats that a young echidna can imbibe up to 40% of its body weight in a single feeding session lasting up to one hour.

There did not seem to be any obvious feeding pattern with M and the length of time between each observed feeding event ranged from 4 to 22 days. However as Frank noted, "It is almost certain that other feeding events occurred that we didn't see. M could move incredibly swiftly and it would be reasonable to assume that we probably missed at least half of the feedings". M only appeared to feed one youngster per visit although on one rare occasion she was actually seen suckling both youngsters at once - quite a feat!

Then in March the feedings stopped and the trio disappeared. But the following Spring all three were sighted foraging once again in the area. "Although we have no reason to believe otherwise", said Frank. "We were unable to prove that the two young echidnas were siblings and cannot discount the possibility that one of the babies was adopted by the mother. Cases of adoption of pouch young are known to occur in marsupials although it would seem unlikely in a solitary animal like an echidna".

For Frank and Janet to have had the opportunity to observe these amazing events so close to their home is a testament to the success of the Shire of Nillumbik's Planning Scheme. The Scheme prohibits domestic pets, maintains the environmental integrity of the area by prohibiting the removal of native vegetation without a permit and restricts the planting of non-indigenous plants to a contained kitchen garden area near each house.

Echidna solarium!

Discovery! Two eggs found in Big Mama's 'pouch'

This story is a very brief precise of a detailed technical paper published in The Victorian Naturalist 124 (6), 2007, 332-340 by Frank Pierce, Janet Mattiske and Peter Menkhorst

And the last word comes from Dr Peggy...

"All I can really say about this happening is the cardinal rule to working in/with nature, 'Expect the unexpected'!"
When I rang Gail Westlake to interview her for this issue of Puggle Post I asked her if she had time to talk or was she in the middle of something. "Actually I am in the middle of something - I'm driving away from the lions", she said - and there we were in South Australia!

Let me explain - Gail drives tour buses at Monarto Zoo - Australia's largest zoo situated about 70 kms east of Adelaide near Murray Bridge. Gail has been working at Monarto for over 10 years and apart from driving the safari buses through the 1000 hectare park she is also involved in general maintenance - like taking old buses apart for spare parts, fixing boundary fences - you know - all the normal things a girl does.

But it's Gail's other hat that Puggle Post was interested in. Gail is also a volunteer guide at Monarto and it was around the time she got involved in guiding she also got hooked on monotremes. "An Adelaide zoo vet at the time wanted to know the size of the wild population of echidnas roaming the Monarto zoo plains", said Gail. "He asked zoo staff and guides to keep an eye out for them. But in 12 months none were sighted, the plan was shelved and the vet moved on. But that question about how many nagged at me so I asked the zoo Director how many he thought there might be. He said 'Why don't you go and find out'. So I did!"

Gail's very first sighting in her capacity as the 'official' echidna spotter was a train of three echidnas. "They were in the scrub with the Mongolian horses", she recalled. "It was another 12 months before I saw my next one".

One thing led to another and Gail's interest in echidnas blossomed; she learnt how to catch and microchip the Monarto echidnas. When she finds them she takes them in for Monarto's vet, Ian Smith, to take skin samples. These samples are sent to geneticist Dr Frank Grützner at Adelaide University to compare them that of a wild population of platypus - the only other monotreme. (*See insert at end of this article)

Gail's reputation grew and her interest turned into a passion. One of the Monarto guides told me about a day when Gail was driving the safari bus for a group of trainee guides. Someone called out "Hey - there's an echidna". All eyes were trained on Gail, she sat there squirming in obvious agitation - "Oh go on", said the group leader. Gail slammed on the brake and was up and out of that bus like a shot, to the amusement of the trainees who watched her catch, with her bare hands, one very surprised echidna and bundle it into a hessian bag (she's never goes anywhere without a hessian bag) to take it in for microchipping.

Gail has been known to stay out all night looking out for echidnas, sleeping in her car - now that's dedication.

If you were to empty out Gail's 'handbag' you'd find a pocket scanner, microchips, a GPS and a "Gail's reputation grew and her interest turned into a passion"
**Echidna sightings**

My husband and I were very surprised to see an echidna wandering around in our fully enclosed back yard at Collingwood Park near Ipswich in Queensland.

We locked our dogs away and tried to encourage him towards the back gates that we had opened, and which leads to a reserve behind us.

It got dark however and it was difficult to keep track of him as he would freeze if we shone the torch in his direction.

Finally we turned off all lights and stood very still and quiet and within minutes he made his way out the gate very purposefully as if he knew exactly where he was headed.

This was the first echidna I have ever seen and to think I am 50 years of age and have lived in Australia my entire life. What was even more amazing, he was wandering around in MY pergola.

But I’m so annoyed - in all the excitement I didn’t think to take a photo!

Dahleen

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Gail has been invited to attend the Australian Academy of Science Boden Research Conference late November this year where scientists from the research community will interact and discuss recent work in particular on molecular aspects of platypus and echidnas.

So if you are visiting South Australia at any time - head for Monarto Zoo and say hi to Gail -if she’s not driving one of the buses check out the bushes in the surrounding Mallee scrub!

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...continued from page 4

radio tracking device complete with aerial - oh yes and you might even find a crowbar - she often needs one to move limestone outcrops in search of shed transmitters.

Earlier this year Dr Peggy went up to Monarto to show Gail how to attach transmitters to the echidnas' spines. Now she can follow and log their movements throughout the park using radio telemetry. Currently Gail has 12 animals fitted with transmitters to date and is 'hunting' for more.

*It was revealed in May this year that the platypus has had its genome sequenced - the first Australian animal to have had this done. The platypus genome has shown ancient links with birds and reptiles and may provide a vital link in discovering our own genetic origins. The sequencing of the platypus genome is expected to open up new areas of research into human disease prevention. By comparing the human and platypus genomes, scientists can work out which genes have been conserved through evolution and might therefore be important in understanding our own DNA. "The platypus is a very ancient offshoot of a mammal tree, so it was 166 million years ago that we last shared a common ancestor with platypuses", says Professor Jenny Graves from the Australian National University, one of the co-authors of the research. The platypus - like the echidna - is an egg-laying mammal. 'Glennie', a female platypus collected at the Upper Barnard River on Glen Rock Station in New South Wales, had her DNA sequenced and investigated by a team of 100 international scientists including 26 Australians.

This research may also be important in ensuring the future of platypuses in Australia. "Now we need to use this data to build strong links to the general biology of platypuses and echidnas to help in protecting these fascinating and iconic creatures" said Dr Frank Grützner, a study author from the University of Adelaide.
Steve who lives 15 kilometres north of the town of Narrabri in northern New South Wales has had more than his fair share of things that go bump in the night. Steve’s report of his echidna encounter was brief and to the point.

“Just thought you would like to know that I have an echidna train under my house! There were four to six echidnas frolicking and bumping most of the night”. We would love to hear more Steve!

One of our Echidna Watchers lives in Victoria on a property close to Trentham, a small historical town nestled amidst the Wombat forest in the midst of the Macedon Ranges and Spa Country - a beautiful place.

This July Katrina spied a large dark brown Echidna that had dug in in her house paddock. She admits she probably wouldn’t have noticed it herself had it not been for her dogs ‘pointing’ the visiting monotreme out to her.

“I think the echidna was around for at least three days. I had heard one of my dogs yapping excitedly on the Sunday but I thought he’d sighted a fox, and didn’t investigate. The next night I did go to have a look and that’s when I saw it. It was still there Monday and Tuesday night and also Wednesday morning around 6.30. But it seemed to have gone by the evening, although it was buried and hard to see it in the dark. I would sometimes prod around the area to find it, which seemed to irritate it - if grunting indicates irritation.

“At first I assumed it was trying to get away from my dogs, but it stay buried even when the dogs weren’t around” Not only was this echidna not in the least bit concerned about Katrina’s dogs but Katrina had actually seen it digging into the run where they were kept. She didn’t say where the dogs were at the time of this invasion of their territory!

"I see this echidna on my property every year around July/August and from memory it has been coming back for the last four to five years - although I can’t really be sure it is the same echidna.

"I have seen echidnas in the area just wandering along the road. Fortunately I have never seen one that has been killed by a car, although I frequently see dead kangaroos and wombats that have been hit ".

Hi Katrina,

Thanks for your echidna sighting. It is especially interesting that you are sighting an echidna about the same time every year. It’s quite possible that it’s the same individual. We know they use home ranges and often return to certain areas at certain times of year. Is this a good time of year for insects in your dog run or yard? Of course we do not really know what echidnas are thinking, but they know how their food sources change over the seasons and act accordingly. Thanks again for your report. Let us know when you see more.

Cheers Peggy for Echidna Watch

about Echidna Watch

Although the echidna is the most widely distributed native mammal in Australia - it is found in every part of the continent - no one knows just how many echidnas there were at the time of European settlement or even how many there are today. Is the echidna thriving or merely surviving? Worse still could it be heading the way of so many of our native animals -towards extinction?

It was with these concerns in mind that Echidna Care members launched the Australian-wide echidna census Echidna Watch.

Echidna Watch was the first of its kind. It all began in 1992 when Echidna Care members enlisted the help of the wider Australian community to report sightings of echidnas, alive or dead. A massive media coverage was launched and with the help of major sponsors like Canon Australia Echidna Watch forms were distributed Australia wide.

Response to the initial phase of Echidna Watch was overwhelming. Not only were completed forms received back from people all over the country, there were letters expressing concern in their areas, personal anecdotes about echidnas and many requests for information. These came not only from Australians, but also from many international travellers who received initial information through parks or community groups distributing Echidna Watch forms.

Now, sixteen years later, Echidna Watch continues to provide invaluable information for research scientists on the echidna with regard to locations, habitat, size, colour, frequency of sightings and activity. All the information received from Echidna Watch forms is collated and entered onto a database by Echidna Care volunteers.

So keep an eye out for echidnas in your area and either email us with your findings or become part of ECHIDNA WATCH. See Echidna Care details on page 10.
Friends of Aldinga Scrub President, Julie Burgher was so excited when she came across five large echidnas partying in the Aldinga Scrub last year she whipped out her pen and drew this amazingly detailed sketch of her echidna train.

Located on the Fleurieu Peninsula, some 46 km south of Adelaide, Aldinga Scrub Conservation Park is one of the last remaining native scrublands in the region. Of rare significance, it is noted for its unusual association of flora and fauna, which over the decades has been threatened by diversion of water, coastal dune disturbance and residential development.

And the Scrub was in the news again last month.

In January this year Paxton Vineyards in South Australia’s McLaren Vale wine region became the first Australian winery to join 1% For The Planet – a global organisation of environmentally aware businesses that donate 1% of their annual sales to environmental causes every year. And in September they announced the recipient of their first 1% FTP donation - Friends of Aldinga Scrub!

continued next page...

(a) Tues 18/9/07 11.30am All large echidnas around 3 kg or a bit more. Rusty brown fur - light coloured spurs
(b) Large shrubs
(c) Gum tree
(d) This echidna at base of tree showing signs of moving further away
(e) 4 metres
(f) Small shrubs (g) half buried and going down
(h) Signs of a few inch ants
(i) Large sticks
(j) Other 4 echidnas rather unconcerned about us and not trying to dig in
(k) This echidna blazenly waving snout around though we were only feet away.
"I’m delighted to confirm that we’ve selected local organisation, Friends of Aldinga Scrub as our 1%FTP charity. Friends of Aldinga Scrub is an important local organisation formed to protect the last remaining native coastal vegetation of the region,” said Paxton General Manager, Toby Bekkers.

"It feels fantastic to be giving something back", he said. "At Paxton we pride ourselves on low-impact, sustainable farming and with our first 1%FTP donation we can now extend our philosophy beyond our own vineyards and support the great work carried out by Friends of Aldinga Scrub."

Julie Burgher said, "We’re incredibly grateful to Paxton for their donation. The donation will greatly assist our continued revegetation program, helping us to preserve these beautiful and treasured natural scrublands for generations to come."

We have a new member of the Echidna Care team - the Feeling Safe Being Strong program. The program was developed in Geelong in Victoria by Bethany Community Support and has been introduced to over 800 primary school children since its inception. The program’s aim is to increase resilience in children who experience violence, particularly family violence.

"We use three metaphors in the program to describe different behaviours", said Chris Storm, the programs project officer. "The bull represents aggressive behaviour, the mouse - passive and the echidna is used to depict an example of assertive behaviour which is why it seemed appropriate that it should become the program’s mascot. There were other reasons for choosing the echidna – for one its protective and safe behaviour; for another the children just love getting their own class puggle to use in activities".

The children work hard at developing and maintaining their echidna behaviour in order to deal with their difficulties. "And all of us associated with the Feeling Safe Being Strong program have developed a special love for these unique little creatures and take every opportunity to embrace the positive echidna qualities in our own lives", said Chris.
ABC News reporter Sally Glaetzer filed this report in July...

Scientists from the University of Tasmania have discovered that echidnas have some unusual mating habits.

Echidnas may be one of Australia's cutest native animals, but there is more to the spiky mammals than meets the eye.

Scientists have been tracking a community of echidnas in southern Tasmania for more than a decade and they have uncovered some slightly disturbing sex habits.

Associate Professor Stewart Nichol says on farmland in the southern midlands they have tagged about 300 echidnas, including one prolific female.

"We've been following her for 12 years now and in that time she's had at least eight babies," he said.

The team is using ultrasound to learn more about the reproductive system of the egg-laying mammals.

"We may be able to see an egg, whether she has an egg inside her or not, this will be very exciting, no-one's ever done this before," he said.

It turns out the female is pregnant, and yet the echidna's body temperature is still very low.

Associate Professor Nichol says the research team has discovered the males do not always wait for the females to emerge from hibernation before making their move.

"We thought it was very ungentlemanly really," he said.

It may be rude, but it helps beat the competition.

"Does this mean the females don't have a choice? It can't be because in biology we'd expect you know females must be able to exert a choice, there might be some internal choice that they're selecting the best sperm somehow," said Associate Professor Nichol.

The male sex organ also has scientists baffled.

"Nobody's really quite sure why it has this strange structure, but we think once again is this something to do with the fact there's competition between males."

Spurs on the males' hind legs have pustules that are also thought to be sex related.

"We're looking for pheromones, we think there may be some signalling function associated with that," he said.

Some echidnas stay in hibernation from January to as late as October.

"That's probably one of the reasons why the echidnas are so successful in Australia, they've got a very energy saving way of life."

Some of the findings were presented at an international hibernation symposium in Africa in August.

All of which leads to this rather appropriate little poem found in a book called Beastly Australians by Leon Gellert - it just might add to the mounting evidence of slightly disturbing echidna sex habits!

The male echidna with its mate
Survives the most precarious state;
He rolls her, hair and spines and all
Into an eezy-weenzy ball -
And buries her; and in this way
Provides against a rainy day.
But, like as not, this same Echidna
Forgets just if, or where, he's hidna!
WIRES Wildlife Information & Rescue Service currently receives calls for up to 5 injured echidnas per day. Many have been run over and are suffering from injured snouts (beaks) and internal injuries. The obvious indication that an Echidna has been the victim of a car is that it may have broken spines on its back and the snout is often bleeding. The Echidna can be blowing bloody bubbles and breathing can also be snuffly. A very slow Echidna, one lying flat on its belly or on its back, may also indicate the Echidna is in trouble.

Please keep an eye out for these marvellous little dinosaurs. Echidna spines will also penetrate car/truck tyres, so try to avoid them and save yourself the cost of a new tyre as well.

Land clearing, cars and dogs are the main threat to the adult Echidnas, while cats and small dogs are the biggest threat to puggles. The importance of logs and dead trees is often overlooked by property owners in their management regimes. Timber left on the ground provides good habitat for Echidnas and indeed all wildlife. Burning of stockpiles of timber can also be detrimental.

Even the tiniest knock can injure the snout. So please go back and check even if you think you may have missed hitting one. Note the exact location so that females can be returned ASAP, in case they have a puggle hidden in a burrow close by.

Report from WIRES (Wildlife Information & Rescue Service) Sharon McGregor

Yearling puggles begin to wander away from their burrows from about September to November and are often referred to as ‘dispersing juveniles’. They do not become sexually mature until they reach 3 - 6yrs of age, at which time they must go in search of their own home range. These dispersing juveniles are now also being sighted around the area so please keep an eye out for them as well. They are often unafraid of humans and dogs and have no idea what harm crossing a road can bring.

The NSW Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service Incorporated (WIRES) is the largest wildlife rescue organisation in Australia. When an echidna is hit by a car, a possum is attacked by a cat or a lizard gets its head stuck in a drink can - WIRES is there to help.

WIRES was established in 1985, when an injured Ibis was found in the heart of Sydney, in Hyde Park. No organisation, government or conservation group could take responsibility for its rescue or care.
Scientists say that the echidna, which has been called a 'freak of nature', has often been the victim of mistaken identity with the hedgehog and North American spiny porcupine but is in fact one of the world's clearest examples of Convergent evolution - the emergence of chance look-alikes. (PS: the porcupine is actually a rodent)

**Solving the case of mistaken identity**

Amazing Echidna Facts

While most mammals have a body temperature of about 37°C the echidnas’ temperature is about 32°C. Their low body temperature and their ability to slow down their breathing and heart rate at will may be why the echidna is the oldest surviving mammal in the world - it’s been around for 120 million years. The echidna can shift into ‘low gear’, dropping its body temperature to below 10°C and breathing only once every 3 minutes. During this time the echidna will eat nothing, surviving only on its body fat. Echidnas living in colder climates have been discovered with body temperatures as low as 4°C.
This Echidna, whom I named Snuffles, came into care after a rather nasty mishap on a main road. A friend of mine was traveling home when he saw a ball in the middle of the road. As cars drove past - at high speeds and without stopping - he saw the ball roll from one side of the road to another, and then back again.

The ball turned out to be Snuffles, who had curled herself into a tight ball to try and protect herself. Her spines were no competition to the cars that sped past, but the gods must have been on her side - she was lucky to have survived. And she was lucky that a kind hearted bloke happened to drive by at that moment and rescued her.

Snuffles didn’t come away unharmed however. She had sustained injuries to her beak. When I saw her my heart sank - beak injuries in an Echidna are rarely repairable as damage usually compromises the strength of the beak which is used to break into termite mounds. Sadly, this kind of injury usually equals euthanasia.

I wasn’t entirely sure just how much damage was done so I decided to wait and see what the vet thought, and the next morning I went to my local vet Judith who x-rayed Snuffles beak and found that the bone underneath was only chipped and advised me that the damage would heal given some TLC. Yippee!

There was a pretty nasty looking cut on the tip of Snuffles beak (hence her name, the injury made her snuffle as she breathed). The wound was slightly infected and required a short course of antibiotics. Todd was away at the time, so my neighbours Rob and Jen helped me out as did my trusty wildlife aid Murray who travelled down to Fourth Crossing to help me administer Snuffles antibiotics. This was no easy task however, as whenever Snuffles was handled she would curl herself up to protect her soft underbelly - the very place I needed to put the needle!

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Left: Snuffles with damaged beak. Centre: Getting lots of TLC from author and “trusty wildlife aid” Murray. Right: Enjoying luxury accommodation

continued next page...
The first few days of Snuffles care were inside a heated crate. Echidnas can't tolerate high temperatures so a thermometer was placed inside the crate to ensure the temperature didn't rise excessively. To keep Snuffles wounds clean the crate was lined with soft towels and not dirt and leaf litter as this may have caused further infection in the wound.

Snuffles slept soundly for the first few days after her ordeal. But as she grew stronger, so did her desire to get out of that crate!! To keep the lid firmly in place I used packaging tape to secure it to the crate. This was no obstacle for an escaping Echidna! With all her might she pushed through the gap (that allowed air into the crate) and was on the way to freedom. Pity for Snuffles, I was close by and her escape was thwarted.

The escapee Echidna was then moved into a bigger crate - one that she couldn't reach the top of! As her beak wound had healed nicely Snuffles was given the luxury of dirt, leaf litter and bush furniture in her new home. A heat pad was placed under the dirt in one corner which she loved to sleep on top of at night. During the day she would shuffle around and the bush like setting kept her occupied as she searched for food and dug to her hearts content.

Collecting Snuffles natural food was a daily task. Luckily we have a couple of termite mounds on Fourth Crossing and we cut the top off one to access the tiny bugs inside. After collecting the termites and dirt we would put the lid back on to keep it closed to the weather. After Snuffles had gone it was amazing to see that the termites had completely sealed the lid to the rest of the mound as if it was never there in the first place.

Snuffles loved her termite slurry which had other yummy goodies in it like lean mince meat, egg and calcium. Her long tongue would slurp up the delicious meal quite quickly. She was getting it pretty good at the Fourth Crossing diner and during her time in care she put on 1kg.

Once Snuffles beak had healed and the bone inside was strong again she was ready to be released back into the wild. We chose a great site down the back in the bushy area of our property.

Snuffles quickly shuffled to a hollow log on the ground and squeezed in with only her spiky rump exposed. She didn't move from there for the longest time and we grew bored of watching her backside. Feeling rather chuffed we went back home to later return to check on her progress.

She was gone.... back to bush.

More amazing Echidna facts
The echidna spines are really hairs with a root that goes into a muscle - no other mammal have spines like these. They can move each hair individually!
Echidna Care Inc have produced **Echidna Road Signs** that have been designed to help protect your local echidnas from becoming just another road kill statistic. Put up warning signs on any roads your echidnas may have to cross so you can warn motorists of the danger (to the echidnas!). The yellow plastic signs with the wording “Echidnas Next 4Kms” are available in 4 different sizes:

- **12 x 12cm (swing, with suction cup)** $2
- **18 x 18cm** $3
- **25 x 25cm** $4
- **38 x 38cm** $6

**Bonus:** Buy any two signs and get a free Echidna Watchers Guide (what all good echidna watchers should have) and road sign magnet.

Postage for any two signs $4

Postal address: Echidna Care Inc Post Office Penneshaw Kangaroo Island South Australia 5222

**Questions?** e-mail: echidna@kin.net.au

Please don’t let this be the fate of the echidnas in your area...

Please pass this E-newsletter on to any person or group you think may be interested. If you are reading this as a ‘pass-on’ and would like to be included on our regular E-mailing list contact us at echidna@kin.net.au