At the end of last year Muse Opiang finished his Honours thesis about long-beaked echidnas. He worked from 2000 to 2003 and was able to find and follow six different animals. This may not sound like many, but it is the most long-beaked echidnas seen in the wild for nearly two decades.

On completion of this thesis, Muse returned immediately to the field in search of a new study site and more long-beaked echidnas so he could continue studies for a PhD. We recently received the e-mail from him and are thrilled that all is going so well. "I have been out at Supa for last three months so could not answer your e-mail. The dream has come true!!!!!!!!!!!. I have eight long-beaked echidnas with the transmitter on them. I stopped finding echidnas because I have only 8 transmitters. I have been tracking them since November 04. The attachment is good therefore they have been moving allot. I recaptured four of them and checked the transmitters and their legs. The transmitters are still well attached and legs are ok. Apart from the daily tracking, I also have been collecting invertebrates along 5 x 400m transect lines. I have many interesting stuff to compare with some invertebrates I saw in the echidna's poo.

Whoooo, I am exhausted!!! I am getting supplies and heading back to the field in the morning. Will be in touch when I get back to town again.

Many greetings, Muse

Interested in reading Muse’s thesis "A study of home range, movements and den use in long-beaked echidnas, Zaglossus bartonii, in the Crater Mountain Wildlife Management Area, Papua New Guinea”? You can request a PDF file of the thesis from: echidna@kin.net.au
Imagine this if you can, an 18cm long tongue stuck in one of those fancy, you beaut nozzles of a garden hose. This is how a poor unfortunate echidna was found in a backyard in Victoria recently. It took some doing to unfasten the nozzle from the hose and dissemble it to free the very swollen echidna tongue.

What was the echidna doing? Getting a drink? After the ants that had gone into the hose nozzle? The positive points are that the echidna was attracted to and felt safe enough to come and forage in the yard. The disconcerting matters are the unforeseen dangers that lurked there.

What else is in your garden or around your house that could inadvertently harm echidnas or other wildlife that might come exploring? Chemical fertilisers, insect and weed controls that are used on or around plants, enter the soil and the invertebrate life that lives there.

Echidnas ingest large amounts of soil while feeding on their invertebrate prey. They not only go for ants, but are especially fond of beetle and moth larvae of all kinds...the things that might be living and feeding on the roots of your plants.

Little is known about long term effects of household and common garden chemicals on invertebrate life. Even less is known about the consequences for invertebrate eating and soil ingesting wildlife. There is evidence that ground spraying a commonly used ‘safe herbicide’ caused poisoning in echidnas that foraged directly in the sprayed areas.

And what happened to the echidna with its tongue caught in garden hose nozzle? The story does not have a happy ending. Wildlife carers who rescued the echidna cooled the swollen, cut and bruised tongue until they could visit a vet the next day where the animal had to be euthanased.

How safe if your backyard for wildlife?
South Australia's Barossa Valley is a world famous destination for those seeking culture and fine wine. Now another group of connoisseurs of Australiana is visiting the area. These new tourists are coming from far and wide to visit the 'Phoenix' of the Barossa - the Barossa Bushgardens. Here, rising from the tired and worn soils of a derelict farm paddock, lost jewels of the land are coming back to life.

This regional Australian native botanic garden has become a showcase for home gardeners. There are sample display gardens laid out on suburban-size house block sites showing how you can have a healthy garden with very little water. Advice on how and where to get started is readily available on site.

Four years ago there was one old, unhealthy looking, red gum standing alone in the middle of a barren paddock. Today a skirt of companion trees, shrubs and ground covers surround a prospering patriarch. Natural ground covers have become living carpets while bush climbers and shrubs have created cooling breezeways sanctuaries for hot summer days and equally effective as winter windbreaks. Native birds, chirping crickets and choruses of frogs are the added bonus. And, most encouraging, is the tell-tale sign of inquisitive echidnas. When these and other native cultivators/gardeners move in, the area has a genuine 'Living Certificate of Achievement', said visiting Echidna expert Dr. Peggy Rismiller.

Encouraged by the Barossa Council, local volunteers rich in gardening experience and calling themselves 'Bushgardeners', have adopted the plants in the gardens tending to their needs. All plants in the gardens are native to the area and in many cases this is the last place they can be found. Originally the Bushgardens were designed to bolster dwindling native seed resources - 97% of Barossa's native vegetation has been cleared - but the project has grown beyond that.

Barossa Bushgardens Open Days are held each spring and autumn (next Open Day Sun 15 May 2005) where you can buy native seedlings and get plenty of free advice. Barossa Bushgardens is on Penrice Rd Nuriootpa and is open 365 days a year, entry is free although donations are appreciated. Website www.barossa.sa.gov.au
What’s white, prickly and belongs in the bush?

This was a story run in Tasmania’s Herald Sun and written by John Briggs

This little fellow who has been boarding at a wildlife park for the past two weeks.
The extremely rare albino echidna was seen crossing a Tasmanian highway two weeks ago and his rescuer decided to take him to ZooDoo Wildlife Fun Park, near Hobart.

ZooDoo’s Trevor Cuttriss has seen a white wallaby and some other pale versions of wildlife but never a white echidna.

“Peter Courtney, from Melbourne Zoo, told me this bloke must be one in a million”, Mr Cuttriss said yesterday.

“There is one in captivity in a Queensland zoo but after consultation with the nature conservation branch of Parks and Wildlife we’ve decided to return him to the bush.

“It’s been fun having him here and he’s been like an early white Christmas present for everyone”.

The echidna, about four years old, as taken yesterday to a secret location about a kilometre from where he was found. It was decided his best chance of survival would be well into the scrub and away from the more obvious predators.

Left: Trevor Cuttriss and his special friend
The Echidna
by Mary Rose Liverani © 2001

Would you be an echidna? - I widna’
The echidna is a little shy,
He mostly hangs his head,
And should he hear you passing by,
He’ll hurry off to bed

Inside a log,
Or under leaves, he lays
 Himself to rest,
Paws outstretched,
 Snout between,
 He ponders what is best

The meat-ant queens
Who’re full of fat
Are soon to fly away:
Should he go round and rip their mound
Or wait another day

Until his snout -
He touches it - is feeling much less sore.
Those worker ants had savaged it
When he first broke down their door

They nipped and nipped,
And tore his flesh,
Until he thought he’d scream
Take that and that,
He heard them cry,
You horrid monotreme!

So feeling sad and fat-deprived
He sank down on his tum,
And wondered why, in at least a year,
He hadn’t heard from Mum.

She’d loved him much,
He remembered well,
While he was in her pouch,
But once his spines began to prick,
She’d started crying ‘ouch’.

And took him out,
And hid him deep,
In a mix of mulch and bark,
And fed him from her milky glands,
Then left him in the dark.

Don’t fret my child,
I won’t be long,
He trembled to hear her say:
I’ll be back to feed you,
Why, every other day.

And so it proved:
She never failed
To come back with his feed
Her pinkish milk
Oozed down his throat
No matter what his greed!

Then one hot night she waddled off
And he began to dream.
His Mum was gone forever,
Obeying her phylogene.
A silent tear slid down his snout
And hovered on the tip
A terrible pain afflicted him -

Evolution’s poor misfit.
He straightened his reptile shoulders,
He raised his mammal’s head,
He wiped his bird-like eye
And to himself he said:

I cannot understand it,
This evolution scene,
Or why the lowest mammal
Is labelled “monotreme.”

I don’t believe it matters,
That I’m both bird and beast,
A special place is set for me
At the great big global feast.

So a monotreme I mean to stay
Despite the jibes and jeers,
I’ll lay my eggs and nurse my young
For another million years.

The Echidna
by Mary Rose Liverani © 2001
...new mum!

Congratulations to our newest echidna parent - Denise from Hamlyn Terrace in New South Wales. Denise, originally hailing from England, loves echidnas and was given an Echidna Adoption as a birthday present. She is sponsoring the female echidna Pasta. Pasta has played an important role in recent discoveries made about echidna biology. She was one of the subadults that was monitored and followed to determine the age of sexual maturity in echidnas. Finally, at the age of 9 years, she attracted her first courtship train and produced her first egg and puggle. That was in 2002. Pasta has not reproduced in the past 2 years, which we know in normal, we maybe there will be another puggle in 2005.

You too can adopt an echidna and help support echidna field research. It has taken many years to answer basic biological questions and there is still more to learn about the survival secrets of our oldest surviving mammal.

For $100 you could become a parent of a little cutie like this one…

by joining the ADOPT AN ECHIDNA programme, a scheme set up by Echidna Care.

Adopt an Echidna Programme is looking for schools, organisations, companies or individuals to act as foster parents. “Official” Echidna Adoption papers will be sent to new ‘parents’ and they will receive a regular update about what their ‘kid’ gets up to.

All ‘adoption fees’ are used for continuing research by Dr. Peggy and will help directly with field work, continual monitoring of individuals and community outreach programs.

What a great gift to give someone who has everything – except their very own echidna!

Contact Echidna Care Inc. Adoption Agency P.O. Penneshaw, Kangaroo Island, South Australia 5222 Email: echidna@kin.net.au

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
...You will find it in Australia’s Northern Territory right where the Stuart and Lasseter highways intersect. The Stuart continues on north to Alice Springs eventually ending up in Darwin while the Lasseter highway heads west to Yulara (Ayers Rock). Although it is marked on the map Erldunda isn’t a town really, just place where you can get fuel, eat or sleep called Desert Oaks Resorts. There’s a backpackers, a caravan park, a motel, a tavern and a service station… and something else - a humungous echidna imprisoned behind a mesh fence in an open sided shed - thank goodness. This fearsome beasts stands at least two metres tall and I’d take a guess that it would be over four metres long; It is huge. Once this mighty echidna walked and talked but now it is stands staring out of its cage in silence Some think it wandered in from the desert but actually it originates from Brisbane along with its giant companion - a frilled neck lizard. The rumour goes that it once held pride of place at The Brisbane Expo back in the 80s where it entertained thousands of international visitors. As they say …one day a rooster next day a feather duster!

Travelling Echidnas

Would you like the Echidna Discoveries exhibition displayed at your school, library, museum or local community hall? This travelling exhibition is a wonderful resource on the life and times of the tachyglossus and covers everything from the description of monotremes, historic and modern echidna research, a collection of 19th century illustrations by German scientists Richard Semon’s, and the fascinating life cycle of the echidna from egg to adulthood. It has been suggested that the ideal venue time is between four and eight weeks. The exhibition is completely self contained with 64 mounted and laminated graphic and text panels that are sequentially numbered and ready for display with velcro tabs attached to the back sides for easy hanging. All units are a maximum A3 size and the exhibition comes in its own travelling/freight containers. Sponsored by Canon the exhibition has visited all Australian capital cities as well as travelling extensively throughout country and rural areas in South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. There are separate copies of the exhibition circulating in Europe, UK, USA and Japan. If you would like more details on the Echidna Discoveries exhibition contact Joy Walterfang at hinchinbrook@internode.on.net
Has your membership lapsed? Or would you like to make a research donation? Know someone who wants to join Echidna Care Inc?

Membership fees for Echidna Care are for a 12 month period.

There are several membership categories

- **Standard-Individual** $15
- **Student/pensioner** $10
- **Group Membership** $25
- **Overseas** $25

Please send your fees or donations to:
Echidna Care Inc.
Post Office Penneshaw
Kangaroo Island South Australia 5222

All Echidna Care membership fees and donations are used to purchase field research equipment for Dr Peggy Rismiller's echidna research on Kangaroo Island and for community education programmes.

Echidna Care Inc have **Echidna Road Sign Kits** available which have been designed to help protect your local echidnas from becoming 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 Echidna Road Sign Kits cost $A5 each which includes postage in Australia (please add an extra $A5 for overseas orders). The kits consist of two yellow plastic signs, 19x19cms, with the wording “Echidnas Next 4Kms” and also what all good echidna watchers should have-“The Echidna Watcher’s Guide”. Echidna Road Sign Kits are available from: Echidna Care Inc. Post Office Penneshaw Kangaroo Island South Australia 5222

Email: echidna@kin.net.au