The Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board launched their new mascot at the Gawler Agricultural and Horticultural Show in September. Spike, a bright purple echidna joined in the fun at the Board’s stand. He handed out show bags and encouraged children and adults alike to participate in all the interactive activities.

"Spike will be the official Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board mascot and will promote the importance of managing and protecting our natural resources to our audiences, including children" said Mr Kym Good, the Board’s General Manager.

Spike was chosen to represent the Board because the echidna is a quirky, unique, strong and iconic Australian mammal and is found right across the Adelaide and Mount Lofty region.

The stand was one of 200 at the show and provided information about the importance of managing and protecting natural resources. There were lots of give-aways and fun things to do and see.

Kids had the opportunity to make their own nesting boxes for birds and possums and learned how to handle a snake with local reptile expert, Geoff Coombe.

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The stand also featured the Waterwatch display where kids could view, through a microscope, some of the micro and macro vertebrae from the local creek and then identify them by using the Board’s aquatic life picture display.

Echidna Care loaned the Board their 64 panel echidna display for the show. This display has done the rounds of Australia many times and has also travelled overseas. It tells the complete echidna story right from the days of the dinosaurs!

Right: The echidna 64 panel display attracted lots of interest from all sorts - including one very curious reptile!

Looking for that competitive edge!

Hi Peggy - I took this photo (left) of an echidna train out the back of Emu Bay area, on the side of the road. I didn’t know what I was seeing but the person I was with did and explained to me all about echidna trains and said you were asking for sightings, so I thought I’d send you these photos. It was just an amazing sight. We watched for about 15 mins. I was so excited! Mary-Alice Kangaroo Island.

Echidna trains, when one female is followed by one or more males, are only seen during the winter breeding season.
Louisa and Ilker of Kangaroo Island had an unexpected find in their feral cat trap. "In five years this is the first echidna that has ever found its way into one of our traps", they said. Concerned that it might be one of Dr Peggy’s research subjects they contacted Pelican Lagoon but were advised that if it was one of their chipped echidnas it should have a colour patch. "It was inspected for same (not found) and was released and began digging into the earth at the same location, making no attempt to move away, so we did", said Louisa.

Feral and domestic cats present a real threat for echidnas. As Dr Peggy describes in her book *The Echidna: Australia’s Enigma* – "Besides being good hunters, cats have the ability to present their paw bottom side up with claws exposed, to the underbelly of their prey. It is not strength but timing that allows this predator to dislodge and kill an echidna. Cat kills are distinct as they leave the spiny fed-upon carcass turned inside out". Cats also kill up to 20 per cent of all echidna young – the puggles while still in their burrows.

"I’m out of here!”...
Ben loves cute animals. Top of the list is frogs, but he also likes butterflies, turtles, crocs and birds. Ben’s family are into native flora and fauna, so at two he already knew what echidnas were - although he hasn’t seen one in the wild - yet.

He was searching through a Women's Weekly cookbook with his mum trying to decide what sort of cake he wanted for his third birthday party when he came across an echidna cake – that was for him! His mum Tori told Puggle Post "I was so glad he chose this unique animal. So we decided to turn the whole event into an echidna party", she said. "My husband found a fabulous photo of an echidna on the Pelican Lagoon website and contacted Dr Peggy to ask if we could use it on the birthday invitations".

The party was a resounding success with an obstacle course in the back yard that ended in an echidna’s burrow (a small tent) where the kids ate echidna poo (chocolate crackles which probably tastes better!).

Ben’s mum downloaded some echidna info from the net and had 20 interesting echidna facts written on pieces of paper that were slipped into each layer of a newspaper in a pass the parcel game. As each layer was stripped off one of the older party guests read each one out to the kids (and mums). There was also some other echidna themed food like banana muffins for burrow rocks?

"We had a lovely morning", said Tori, "And echidnas are now firmly on the list of Ben’s favourite animals! My only regret is that I did not learn sooner that a baby echidna was called a puggle, as we would have loved to have called it a Puggle Party!

Left: Echidna fan Ben celebrating his 3rd birthday whilst keeping a close eye on his echidna cake!
Earlier this year Queensland couple Sharon Swan and Liam Mahoney were visiting Kangaroo Island on a work related project. With a day to spare and being keen naturalists and avid echidna watchers they decided to try and find Pelican Lagoon.

Now the size of Kangaroo Island surprises some people, it is approximately 155 km in length and 50 km at its widest with a total land mass of 4350 square km. So tracking down Dr Peggy and Mike, a couple as elusive as their echidna mates, was going to be one huge task. Fortunately for Sharon and Liam they came across Dr Peggy’s book, The Echidna: Australia’s Enigma which had a map, on the inside cover, of the island with an arrow pointing in the rough direction of Pelican Lagoon – not exactly a UBD street directory but the determined pair obviously had extraordinary navigation skills because they honed in on their target.

The Great Echidna in the Sky was with them all the way as Dr Peggy and Mike were just coming in for lunch with one of their field research teams when Sharon and Liam lobbed up. They got their newly acquired echidna book signed, had a quick look around and made a very generous donation to help with ongoing research projects.

Sharon and Liam are both active in research and technology themselves and appreciate how hard it is to get funding for projects. "Besides", said Sharon "We like to give back to the environment for the benefits we gain from it"

And it wasn’t long before The Great Echidna in the Sky was rewarding the caring pair yet again.

An automatic flying unit that can fly into cyclones to take readings

They had decided to drive home via the southern coast. On the way they visited the Mount Gambier Volcanic Complex with its four crater lakes - Blue, Browne, Valley and Leg of Mutton Lake.

They were walking down into the steep and now waterless crater of the Leg of Mutton lake, lush with thick undergrowth and huge trees, looking for signs of an old tree nursery established there in the early 1800s. But instead they came upon an area thick with rich leaf litter and there, right in the middle, busily digging away, was the healthiest young echidna they had ever seen. They watched enthralled. The echidna decided the attention was too much so promptly rolled into a ball – out of sight out of mind – allowing them to approach and get a really close up look. "They are such a remarkable animal – just gorgeous", said Sharon "I have always been fascinated by them since I can remember. Nature makes some beautiful shapes and the echidna is certainly one of the unique ones".

And Sharon and Liam should know all about shapes - it is their business. They are proprietors of a composite component manufacturing company in Toowoomba in Queensland - LSM Advanced Composites. Their application of technology is real cutting edge stuff.
Wherever possible we try and keep the Puggle Post on a positive note but there are times when we have to include the not so positive - and this is one of them. A very upset tour driver on Kangaroo Island sent Dr Peggy this photo. Someone had placed 3 THREE, road kill echidnas together in a 'humping' position along the road. This world of ours seems to be divided into two categories of people - those who care and those who don’t give a damn. This sad, unfortunate picture shows the mentality of those who don’t care. Thank goodness for all you ‘do care’ people out there.

The good, the bad and the downright ugly...

They make products from lightweight composite materials that kilo for kilo are many times stronger than steel. The lists of products they have made is too long for this little newsletter but just to give you a sample - they make skydiving helmets, sporting equipment, parts of cars, musical instruments, base unit for neo-natal emergency cots, bodies for automatic flying units that fly into cyclones to take readings. They also make bodies for unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) - you know the sort of thing - the little spheres you see in Dr Who – that hover above you taking videos to send back to the Daleks. Well something like that anyway.

And what is on the drawing board at LSM - maybe a lightweight car shaped like an echidna that runs on fuel cells? You think we are kidding – just watch this space!

Violin bodies made by LSM

Echidna Care Membership

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** $A25

Please send your fees or donations to:

**Echidna Care Inc. Post Office Penneshaw Kangaroo Island South Australia 5222 South Australia**
Hello from Allora on the Darling Downs!

We live on a 40 acre property, and have recently seen a lot of echidna activity. Yesterday I discovered one half buried under a shelf unit in the carport. In the evening I observed one foraging in the garden. So I went back to check if the first one I had seen was still there, and sure enough it was so we obviously have two :) 

I have read on your wonderful website that echidnas breed in winter, so thought this might be why there are two around.

One thing that bothers me is the fact we are having to treat the bases of our cottage stumps with a chemical (as we had seen termites trying to have a chew at a couple)

When we have done that we did intend to treat all the garden timbers but now we have seen our new visitors I feel this might have a detrimental effect!

It's difficult to know how to treat this problem. We can't have termites attacking the house, yet we don't want to cause any harm to these delightful little creatures. Has it been observed that termite treatment has had a negative effect on the echidna population?

We have always had 2 dogs, until about 3 years ago, when both died and we never replaced them. Maybe this a contributing factor - the echidnas can now wander about unmolested.

Is there anything I can do in any way to make life a little easier for the echidnas?

I was wondering if you could tell me what type of echidnas we have from the enclosed photos I took about two weeks ago.

Many thanks for all your information on the site, I really enjoyed finding so much with so many photos, in one place.

Kind regards, Shirley W

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Hello Shirley,

Thanks for your message and photos. From the photographs I would ID your echidnas as Tachyglossus aculeatus aculeatus. This is the name for the sub species which occurs along the eastern coast and as far inland as the Murray Darling.

We are always interested in records and observations. Yes, winter is the breeding season for short beaked echidnas. Australia is a big country and so courtship begins different times in different areas. The more we can learn, the better we can understand how they live and their chances for continuing.

Your concern about poisoning termites is a valid one. However, termites are not the only food source of the Short Beaked Echidna. On Kangaroo Island our echidnas feed on a minimum of fifteen different invertebrates. Termites are a small part of the diet. We live in the bush and also have problems with termites in garden timbers. The local solution has been to use native stone or rammed earth for borders and retaining walls.

Many people are concerned about termite treatment. The concern is not just for echidnas but also for humans. We now know that many of the chemicals used as termite...
Identifying an intruder!

The worker termite who can dismantle your house and takes it back to the colony for supper!

One night last week, I came home from school (fairly late) to find the ceramic toilet roll container tipped over, the lid broken but not the main part. However this time it happened while I was home. The dogs were in the lounge and did bark a bit and I heard a few bangs, but the possum often make a racket on the roof so I didn’t take any notice.

Then it occurred to me that an echidna might have been the culprit. I had found out, through the Internet, that echidnas are renowned escapologists, and have been known to literally dismantle a building in their bid for freedom. What do you think?

Jan S Victoria

repellents and poisons are also harmful to humans; particularly young children. In recent years there has been a lot of interest in alternative termite treatments. These are most useful when building a new structure rather than retro-fitting. If you are interested in learning more, a good book has been written by Robert Verkerk called Building Out Termites, an Australian Manual for Environmentally Responsible Control, 1990, ISBN 0 949138 48 7.

Many gardeners find that increased ground cover and understory plantings offer not only increase habitat for echidnas but for birds, lizards and small native mammals. The vegetation also supports healthy soil.

Thank you for the reports. We have no recent records from your area so this helps with more new information.

Cheers for now, Dr Peggy
Dear Dr Peggy,

We run the Wildlife Shelter at Yarrambat, 30 kilometres north of Melbourne. Today an echidna was brought in with an injured beak.

The echidna was found with a rubber washer around the beak, and this washer has "ring barked" the soft skin of the beak.

This 'ring barking' is located near to where the beak joins the skull. The washer size is 24mm outside diameter, 14mm inside diameter and 2mm thick. The tongue seems to have its normal in-out darting motion, and it does appear to be eating. The echidna is quite active. The skin near nostrils feels warm to the touch. The local vet who cut off the washer, suggested paw paw cream on the beak, and then release back to where it was found. We would appreciate your comments.

We did have the privilege of hand-rearing a puggle about 10 years ago - what a wonderful experience.

Many thanks, Regards,
Doug and Jane

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Dear Peggy,

Many many thanks for your very quick and informative reply to our urgent plea for help with the ring barked echidna. We followed your advise and used Paw Paw cream on the beak. He or maybe She, was very cooperative and kept putting its beak through the bars of his cage. We released it this afternoon back where it came from, and straight away it started to forage and dig around, and seemed quite happy.

We did watch it for 30 or so minutes as it continued to search and dig in different locations, it was such a great feeling to see the echidna go free. Thank you for the Echidna Watch Forms, we will pass them around, and also fill one in for "Ring-bark"

Again many thanks,

Regards, Doug

...and the happy ending!

...What a lesson for people not to let rubbish get in the bush or along the roads!

Hi Doug and Jane,

I have heard of one other echidna that had somehow got a washer around its beak!

What a lesson for people not to let rubbish get in the bush or along the roads!

It is quite normal for an echidna that has been rescued not to eat....they can actually go for weeks without eating. If the animal has no other obvious injuries, I would take the advise of the vet to put a herbal cream on the injured area and release the echidna. Paw Paw is good because it is usually quite viscose and will 'stick' for a short time. I always use herbals on animal with external injuries.

You might want to colour code the echidna before releasing it so that if it is observed again it will be recognised. I usually use the plastic tubing off electrical wire, put a dab of super glue in the a short piece of tubing and put it on 2 adjacent spines.

Hope this helps.

We are always interested in echidna sightings. I have attached an Echidna Watch Form. Feel free to pass it on.

Cheers

Peggy
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
Hi from your editor!

It was a lovely day for a bush walk and a group of us were hiking along the Heysen Trail in the Adelaide Hills in South Australia.

I happened to be looking down when suddenly I spied gold! Actually what I saw was more valuable than gold; hen’s teeth are more common!

It was a neat shiny little black cylinder covered in fine white gossamer threads – it was Echidna poo. What a find!

It looked fresh and judging by the amount of nose pokes and digs nearby the depositor probably wasn’t far away.

I was somewhat disappointed that my excitement at the scat discovery wasn’t shared by my walking companions. But they humoured me, each searching their backpacks for a suitable container to carry this rare find.

After that a general discussion on animal scats ensued and we found we were walking with heads down scanning the ground. Someone asked what koala scats looked like – I didn’t know but one of the others did. "Small oval pellets the colour of eucalyptus leaves", they said. And blow me down half an hour later that same person called us over, “Hey have a look here is a whole pile of fresh koala scats”.

Judging by the amount of the small green pellets my first thought was that it may be prudent to look up rather than down. And when we did, sure enough, there was one big fluffy kola bottom wedged between two branches of a gum tree and well and truly aimed at us!

Duck!

Echidna scats hold a wealth of information for scientists. They look for a number of things. Firstly they look at soil type, to see where the echidna has been foraging. Secondly the scat will divulge the invertebrate content, ie legs, exoskeletons and mouth parts to see what the echidnas have been eating. Next they look for other organic components such as seeds and mycorrhizal fungi that these monotremes help disperse throughout the bush. And finally they check out hormone levels which helps determine when the reproductive hormones kick in on a seasonal basis.

So much information contained in one little black cylinder!

Why did the echidna cross the road?

My ear pricked up – as they always do when I hear the word ‘echidna’ mentioned.

It was a Sunday morning and my radio was tuned to ABC radio 891 in Adelaide and the presenters were discussing echidnas.

One of them was relating a recent echidna experience.

He said he saw an echidna on the side of the road, it appeared to the observer that it wanted to cross the road but it was hesitating.

All of a sudden, out of nowhere, came three magpies who flew around the little echidna like an escort as he crossed the road. The moment he was safely across the other side the magpies flew away.