

# Platypus, turtles and native water rats in the Hunter Valley– have you seen them on your property?

## Surveys of platypus, turtles and water rats

Riparian fauna surveys are planned within the Hunter Valley in summer 2022-23 and Hunter Local Land Services (LLS) is currently seeking sites of interest from landholders in the Wollombi catchment and Goulburn River catchments of the Munmurra, Merriwa (includes Coulsons Creek), Krui and Bow Rivers.

Hunter River Short-neck turtle, platypus and the native water rat are the target species in these surveys. Hunter LLS is requesting assistance from landholders who have sighted or are aware of these species on their property.



Platypus

## Project Background

During the 2019 drought, concern was raised about the Hunter River Short-neck turtle population status due to mass mortality events.

Hunter LLS engaged North West Ecological Services to undertake surveys in the Hunter River and its tributaries in 2020-21 with the aim of determining the abundance and distribution of turtle populations within the Hunter catchment.

The survey results found the Hunter River Short-neck turtle to be quite abundant and this showed a resilient recovery following the drought and subsequent bushfires of 2019-20.

This next survey will expand on the previous turtle data and include an assessment on platypus and water rat populations.

## Upper Hunter and Wollombi Valley landholders – can you help us?

Platypus is the focus species for Hunter LLS river rehabilitation projects to protect and improve instream habitat pools. Very little data is available on the distribution of this species across the Hunter Valley. This is an opportunity to research our iconic native species.

If you have a creek or river on your property and would like to be considered for the survey, we will need access to set overnight traps in the water and/or wildlife cameras for up to one week. You would also be welcome to assist with the surveys.



Australian native water rat, also known as rakali

## Project Aims

The project aims to determine occurrence and distribution of platypus, turtles, and water rats in the Hunter Valley. Project outcomes include:

- engaging landholders in protection and management of significant refuge habitat pools in priority catchments
- increasing community awareness of instream fauna species and importance of habitat and riparian management
- ongoing observations by landholders on their property to monitor changes in population of platypus, turtles and water rats

**Contact Hunter LLS if you know of possible suitable survey sites -**

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