This very special story of a puggle who was ‘evicted’ from its home, comes from Lake St Clair National Park in Tasmania.

Wildlife carer Maren tells the story. “I saw a large crowd around a fence that surrounded a little island of vegetation outside our visitors’ centre so I went out to investigate. I didn’t actually see the incident myself”, said Marne. “But heard what happened from a group of visitors who saw the whole ordeal.

“Apparently a French tourist had jumped over the fence and had landed just behind it and right on top of an echidna burrow. Mind you none of us knew there was one there until then.

“The impact of her jumping on top of the burrow destroyed it and the frightened little resident puggle was thrown out and rolled down a small bank.

“It was so fortunate that the Echidna’s mum was just in the bush nearby. She must have seen what happened and rushed through the car park, taking absolutely no notice of the moving vehicles, to rescue her baby.

“It was surprising that at first glance those two echidnas were really hard to see amongst the dust and soil and leaves. Anyway mum stayed with her puggle for a long time; feeding it for several hours. Initially the puggle was covered in grey soil but while mum fed it she also cleaned it. As mums do!

“Many people were watching this amazing spectacle. So I utilized the opportunity and shared what knowledge I had of those very special little creatures that I had gleaned from Dr Peggy during a course she had conducted...
Life in a puggle burrow

Excerpts from *The Echidna Australia’s Enigma* by Peggy Rismiller

...At 50 to 60 days of age, the life of the puggle changes dramatically. It is at this age that its mum places it into the safety of a nursery burrow.

A nursery burrow can be almost anywhere. Nursery burrows often have long curved entranceways. The chamber containing the young is in the rear. Once safely deposited in its new dark surroundings the female backfills the entrance to deter predators and leaves the sightless and nearly naked puggle alone. The puggle no longer has access to milk at all times, but must wait for the female to return in order to nurse.

Return she does but for only two hours once every five to six days. Unplugging the entrance, the mother enters the nursery chamber and nuzzles the young awake. Laying on her side the young has easy access to the milk patch where it suckles hardily and ingests up to 40% of its own body mass in one feeding! Body distended and tired from suckling the young drops off to sleep as the female backfills the nursery burrow and leaves.

This pattern continues until the young is seven months old. By this time it looks like a smaller version of the adult.

On the day of weaning the female opens the nursery burrow and brings the young outside.

Lake St Clair is at the southern end of the world famous Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park and is part of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.

Carved out by ice during several glaciations over the last two million years, this is the deepest lake in Australia and the headwaters of the Derwent River, upon which the capital city of Tasmania is located.

The area around Lake St Clair offers a wealth of walks, ranging from leisurely strolls to overnight bushwalks, as well as beautiful forests to explore.

We have had a recent update about the echidna from Maren...

“I relocated the echidna to our place a few days after the ‘ordeal’ because I was worried that he would be run over by cars speeding through the car park (despite the sign indicating 10 km/h!!). Echidna (never gave it a name) developed into a cute little animal and was the delight of many visitors to the Park. Echidna was coming and going for months. Our winter started very early this year and I haven’t seen Echidna for a long time now. Here is an updated pics - Echidna is not as juvenile as it was at the time of its early ‘wake-up-call’.

We have had a recent update about the echidna from Maren...

“When the feeding was finished mum disappeared. We rang Dr Peggy to tell her about the incident and ask for her advice. She told us that mum probably wouldn’t be back for another week for the next feed. But said, judging by the size of the puggle, that feed could well have been its last!

“In the meantime the puggle was trying to find a place to hide and eventually found a hollow tree stump close to its original burrow.

“Barry, my partner and a ranger repaired the burrow, then we cordoned off the area and let people know about our special resident who would be coming out soon to start it’s life in our realm!

“A few days later Barry and some fire fighters saw the puggle again moving about in its hollow tree stump. It was so big.

“Oh yes, and by the way the hurdling French woman had long disappeared even before I heard about mum and the puggle!”

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Hello Peggy

I live right next to heritage bushland near Finniss between Strathalbyn and Goolwa and have been meaning to keep up with sending in my Echidna Watch forms but I am afraid I have been remiss in sending in records of sightings — although there are not many but I have had a few beautiful experiences since I have been living here. However, recently, about eight one hot evening, I had a visit from this very special thirsty echidna and felt I really must share this with you. She/he was drinking when I first went out with the camera but froze suspended on the rocks when she sensed my presence. She drank a bit more after I went inside and I watched her through the window for a while but she then pottered off for an evening forage.

Sally R

Hi Sally

Thanks for the fabulous echidna photo. I always get asked if echidnas drink water and your photo certainly shows they do when they want to.

Cheers for now

Peggy

When I moved here two years ago, I witnessed an echidna crossing the main road heading towards a large paddock. I continued to where I was going but on my return, an hour later, I saw the same echidna this time it was walking along the wire fence line of the paddock.

I stopped to talk to it suggesting it stay away from the road because of the danger from passing cars!

Three days later my echidna was at my doorstep as I opened the door the echidna timidly huddled behind the large air conditioning unit on the ground.

There is a lot of open land surrounding the house and my echidna is often in my yard shuffling under dry fallen shrubs, or poking around under the native trees and shrubs around the house.

On another occasion — in the evening — around 10.30 pm, I saw an echidna walking very close to the house. I saw it clearly because the light from the TV shone through the glass panel wall toward the dark outside. I jumped up and went into the next room and through the window saw the echidna move further around the house and then disappear into the darkness. I returned back to watching TV when it happened again — an echidna walked past the glass panel wall. Again I went into the next room and watched it disappear into the dark. Wow! I thought — two echidnas. Twenty minutes later I saw the echidna strolling past yet again!

To this day I'm not sure if there were three echidnas or just one walking around and around the house!

Emilia M
Carrickalinga South Australia.
If it seems a long time since you last saw a Puggle Post – you are right! This is the first for – dare I say it – nearly two years. Where has that time gone!

But we are back on track again. In this issue we have included a couple of interesting stories from our Echidna Watch sightings files.

Keep those sightings coming - it is so important.

Echidnas are found in just about every part of Australia, and yet we still know very little about them.

We don’t even know how many of these important little bio-indicators there were at the time of European settlement or how many there are today.

Is the echidna thriving or merely surviving - worse still, is it heading the way of so many of our native animals - towards extinction?

This is why Echidna Watch is so important. Echidna Care and enlists the help of the wider Australian community to record sightings of echidnas, alive or dead.

This data provides vital information for field biologists, research scientists and wildlife management organizations about echidna locations, habitat, the time of day they are about, size, colour, frequency of sightings, activity etc.

The information collected from the Echidna Watch forms is dissected and keyed into a database by volunteers.

Tens of thousands of Echidna Watch forms have been returned since the census began over 20 years ago and has contributed to the alteration of the international status of the echidna from common to near threatened.

So next time you see an echidna please take a few minutes to record details on an Echidna Care form.

Forms can be downloaded from the website http://www.echidna.edu.au/monotremes/echidna_watch.html and emailed to echidna@kin.net.au or posted to

ECHIDNA CARE INC, Post Office Penneshaw, Kangaroo Island, SA 5222. Remember every bit of information you can provide is important.

Research shows echidnas can live up to 50, are not sexually mature until seven and only breed once every three to five years with just one off-spring; that’s makes for a very slow recruitment.

If our echidnas are being killed by cars, electric fences, feral cats and loss of habitat then we are dramatically reducing their population.

If echidnas, which have been around the longest of all mammals, go, what happens after that?

If you have an interesting monotreme moment you would like to share please forward it to the editor of Puggle Post c/o Echidna Care for inclusion in the next issue of the

Cheers ‘til next time...from the Ed’s desk
A grazier has found a rare albino echidna near Tambo, south-east of Longreach in western Queensland. Grazier John Jones from south of Tambo came across the white echidna on a property he manages, saying he has never seen anything like it. He took it to the local school to show children and teachers. “I don’t know whether the smaller children realise the significance that they may never seen one ever again,” he said. “All its points - its toenails and little face - is pink, the quills are completely white. It seems to have a white fur on the body covering, under the quills. I have not come across anyone yet who has seen one.” Mr Jones says he has now released the echidna back into the bush.

Rare find
Queensland Museum senior curator Dr Steve Van Dyck says he sees more albino echidnas than any other albino animals. “The echidnas don’t really have that many predators, so the survival chances ... in a white echidna are much much better than say the survival chances in a white rat,” he said. “We probably see more of these things because they are not knocked off naturally in the population.” But he says the rate of albinism still makes it a once-in-a-lifetime find. “It’s rare - in animals, in mammals - it is probably one-in-10,000,” he said. “To most people, it would be a once-in-a-lifetime thing. I’m only in a position of luxury - I am in a position where people would report these things to me. Albinos have always been prized in society for their rarity - people have always loved them.”

from an ABC News report posted by Chrissy Arthur on May 23 2012

Photos: John Jones
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.

Please pass this E-newsletter on to any person or group you think may be interested.

If you are already reading this as a pass-on and would like to be added to our newsletter mailing list, contact us at echidna@kin.net.au.

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

echidna@kin.net.au