The Platypus

How do the platypus's features help it live in its natural environment?

Platypus Features

B. Platypus fur has two layers. An outer layer of coarse fur and an underlying layer of extremely dense fur. This layer traps air next to the skin, preventing it from getting wet. This keeps the platypus warm.
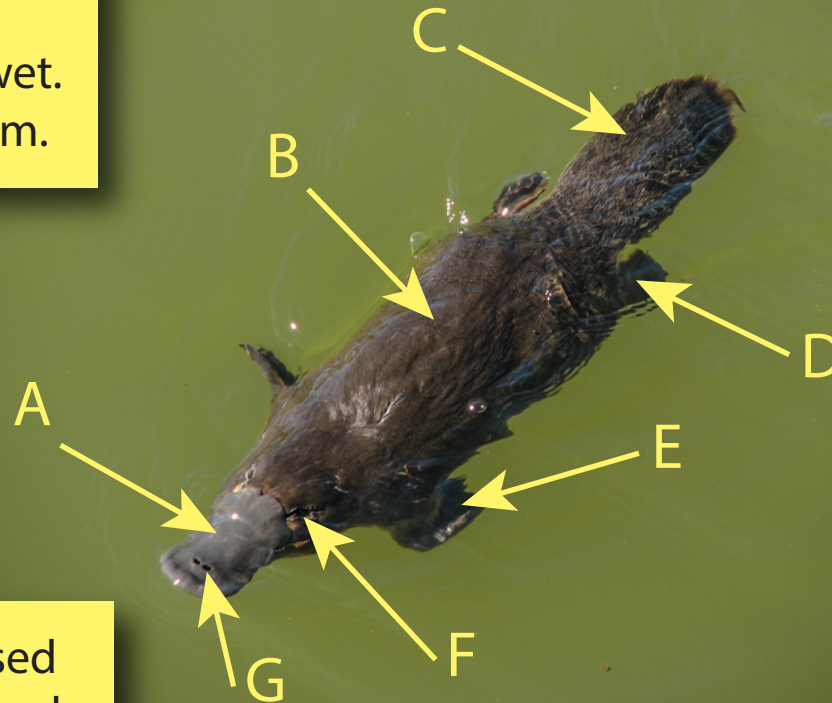
C. A flattened tail acts as a rudder while swimming. It is also where fat is stored for energy.

D and E. Feet have a fold of skin that acts as a paddle for swimming. The feet have strong claws for burrowing and walking on land. Male platypuses have spurs on their hind feet that can inject toxic venom.

A. Bill shaped like a duck is used for foraging for food in river and creek beds. Sensors in the bill are extremely sensitive to movement. A platypus spends 10-12 hours a day looking for food.

G. Nostrils are located on the top of the bill allowing the platypus to breath upon surfacing.

F. The eyes and ears are located in a groove behind the bill. Their eyes, ears and nostils close automatically when they dive underwater. They can spend between 30 and 130 seconds underwater at a time.

Studyladder

In which part of the river are you more likely to find a platypus burrow?

(They dig burrows into the banks of a waterway that has roots and is sheltered by overhanging vegetation.)

Why do you think platypuses are so hard to spot in the wild?

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Platypuses build a burrow into the bank of the waterway for protection for themselves.

In breeding season, however, the mother builds another burrow where she lays 2-3 eggs. She holds the eggs to her belly with her tail to keep them warm. They incubate for about 10 days before hatching. During this time the mother does not leave the nest. She survives on the fat stores in her tail.

The mother feeds the babies milk for 3-4 months before the babies emerge from the burrow.

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The platypus is a protected species in Australia. It is against the law to capture or kill them. The platypus features on the 20c coin in Australian currency.