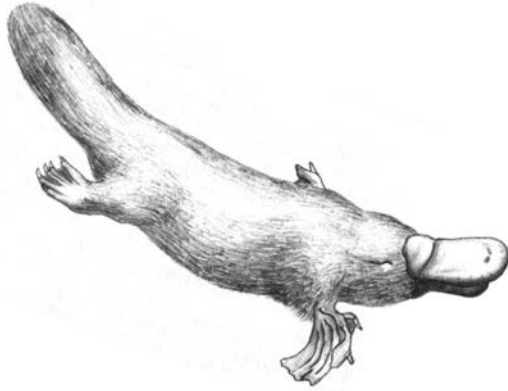


5

ENERGETICS, DIVING AND FORAGING



'In the dusk of the evening, I took a stroll along a chain of ponds (which in the dry country represents the course of a river) & had the good fortune to see several of the famous Platypus or Ornithorhynchus paradoxus. They were diving & playing in the water; but very little of their bodies were visible ...'

CHARLES DARWIN'S DIARY ENTRY (19 JANUARY 1836)

On a summer evening in 1836, Charles Darwin watched several platypuses foraging in a section of the Cox's River now impounded in the waters of Lake Wallace in New South Wales. He noted the animal's low profile in the water but also mentioned its diving habit. Similar observations of platypus diving and foraging behaviour were made by other Europeans – often hunters who commented on how difficult it was to take accurate aim due to the short time the animal spent on the surface of the water between dives. Because of its dependence for food on small invertebrate animals occurring at the bottom of the bodies of water in which it is found, the platypus spends a great deal of its time each day involved in the foraging and diving activities noted by these early observers and hunters.