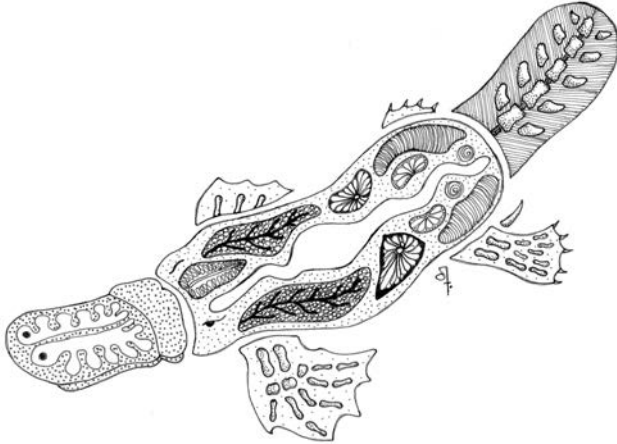


8

CONSERVATION: PLATYPUSES AND PEOPLE



'The natives sit upon the banks, with small wooden spears, and watch them everytime they come to the surface, till they get a proper opportunity of striking them. This they do with much dexterity; and frequently succeed in catching them in this way'.

'Governor Hunter saw a native watch one for above an hour before he attempted to spear it, which he did through the neck and foreleg; when on shore, it used its claws with so much force, that they were obliged to confine it between two pieces of board, while they were cutting off the barbs of the spear, to disengage it'.

SIR EVERARD HOME (1802)

Relating Governor John Hunter's 1797 platypus observation at a lagoon adjacent to the Hawkesbury River near Richmond in New South Wales.

The preserved skin of the unlucky animal, which had been speared and opportunistically observed by Governor John Hunter in November 1797, was transported to England from the colony of New South Wales. It initiated controversies between leading biologists from Britain, France and