

The True Adventures of
Pensacola Phil

As told to Marc Zev

Pensive Products

Chatsworth, California

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An Odd Duck

All the fourth grade classes at Yoshio's school were getting together to put on a Mini Museum of Natural History for the whole school to attend. Each class was responsible for a different department in the museum. One class was putting together exhibits about rocks and geology. Another was making exhibits about arthropods, like insects and spiders. Another class was in charge of sea life exhibits. Yoshio's class was in charge of birds, and the last class was doing mammals.

Mr. Issa's class created displays about crystals, gems, and ore for the geology department. Mrs. DeYoung's class had dioramas of ants, grasshoppers, bees, scorpions, spiders, and butterflies for the arthropods. Ms Chee's class displayed mollusks, squid, tuna, sharks, whales, and sea lions for their sea life section. Mrs. Stein's class had mammals from

each continent: lions, elephants, shrews, platypuses, spider monkeys, and grizzly bears. Ms Whitecloud's class displayed penguins, kiwis, toucans, eagles, and sparrows for the bird exhibit.

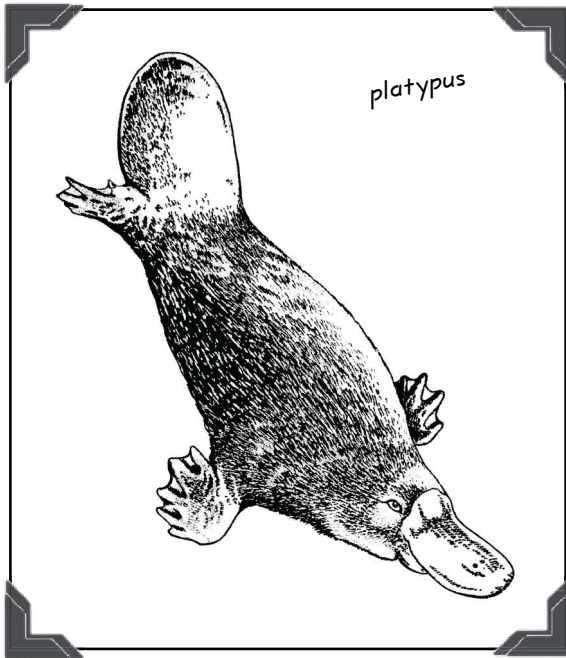
The museum was such a big success that after all the students went through the museum, their parents and other members of the community, including Pensacola Phil, were invited as well. Everyone loved the museum, and a reporter there to write a story for the local newspaper was very impressed, except for one thing. As everyone was leaving, the reporter approached Pensacola to ask a question.

"The kids did a great job, but do you think I should point out the mistake they made in my article?" the reporter asked Pensacola.

Yoshio was walking by when he stopped to find out if Pensacola enjoyed the museum. He arrived just in time to hear Pensacola Phil inquire, "What mistake do you think they made?"

“Well, they had that funny-looking duck listed as a mammal instead of a bird,” replied the reporter.

“I think you need a lesson on animals,” responded Pensacola.



“I’m guessing,” said Pensacola Phil, “that you assumed that the platypus was a bird because of its duck-like bill and the fact that it lays eggs.”

“Of course it is a bird; only birds and

reptiles lay eggs,” replied the reporter, “and it is obviously not a reptile.”

“Actually,” Yoshio explained, “the duck-billed platypus is one of only two species of mammals that lay eggs. Both species of egg-laying mammals, platypod and echidnas [eh-kid-nahz], are members of the monotreme [mon-**oh**-treem] family.”

“Although baby monotremes, called puggles, are hatched from eggs, they drink milk provided by their mothers.”

“Both species are native to Australia, and echidnas are also found in New Guinea,” added Pensacola.

“I guess you two are right, I do need to learn more about animals,” said the reporter. “One more thing. I haven’t heard the word ‘platypod’ before. Isn’t the plural of platypus ‘platypie’?”

“No,” said Pensacola, “‘Platypod’ is the proper plural of ‘platypus.’”

“It is also correct to say ‘platypuses,’ but

never ‘platypie,’” added Yoshio. “Unless you have baked them into a crust, something I don’t recommend.”