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Introduction

Australia is filled with unusual and exotic features. It has desert and rainforest. It has animals that cannot be found anywhere else on the planet. One reason for this is its isolation. Many forms of life existed unknown to Europeans until about 200 years ago.

The platypus is an excellent example of a unique creature living in isolation. When news of the platypus first reached Europe, scientists were convinced that it was a hoax. When they discovered it was a real species, it challenged all the known laws of classification. Today, evolutionists believe that the platypus is an example of early forms of mammals called *monotremes*. There are only two examples still living that we are aware of, and both are found in or near Australia.

Although the platypus is not considered endangered at this time, it is considered rare and vulnerable. That means that it occupies a specific environment that, if altered, could threaten the species. The platypus's habitat is the rivers of Australia. Since platypuses are very sensitive to pollution, the industrialisation of Australia poses a real threat to their existence.

In essence, the plight of the platypus represents the plight of species across the planet. The conflict between profits and conservation is at the heart of environmental issues. Our very presence will alter the environment. However, if we can begin to seek an economic system that places a high priority on safeguarding all life on the planet, the platypus and other species may avoid extermination. This book is intended to raise our awareness of the platypus and all of Australia's unique treasures.

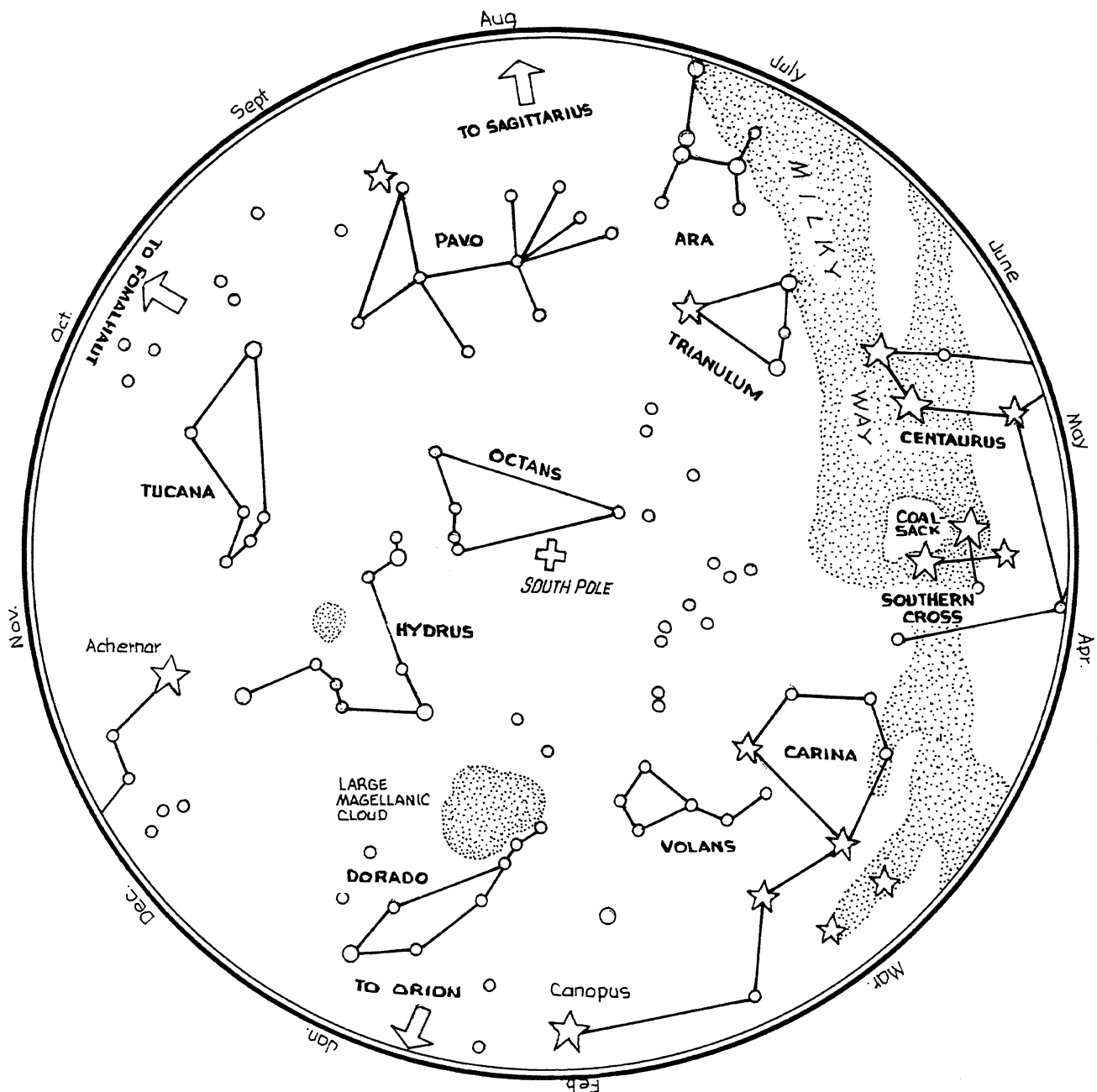


Star Charts Down Under

The stars seen from Australia are not the same stars seen from Canada. The closer to the equator you are, the more you see of the southern sky. The Southern Cross, for example, can be seen at times from southern Texas and Florida. Of course, standing on the equator should give you the best view of both the northern sky and the southern sky. Look at the chart below to view the stars seen south of the equator. Note that there is not a 'South Star' as there

is a 'North Star'. However, the Southern Cross does point to the South Pole.

Notice the Milky Way, the Coalsack, the Large Magellanic Cloud and the Small Magellanic Cloud. Check the library for more information on these formations. Then, on another paper, draw pictures that illustrate the constellations. For example, draw a Centaur to fit the stars in the constellation 'Centaurus'.





Make a Star Projector

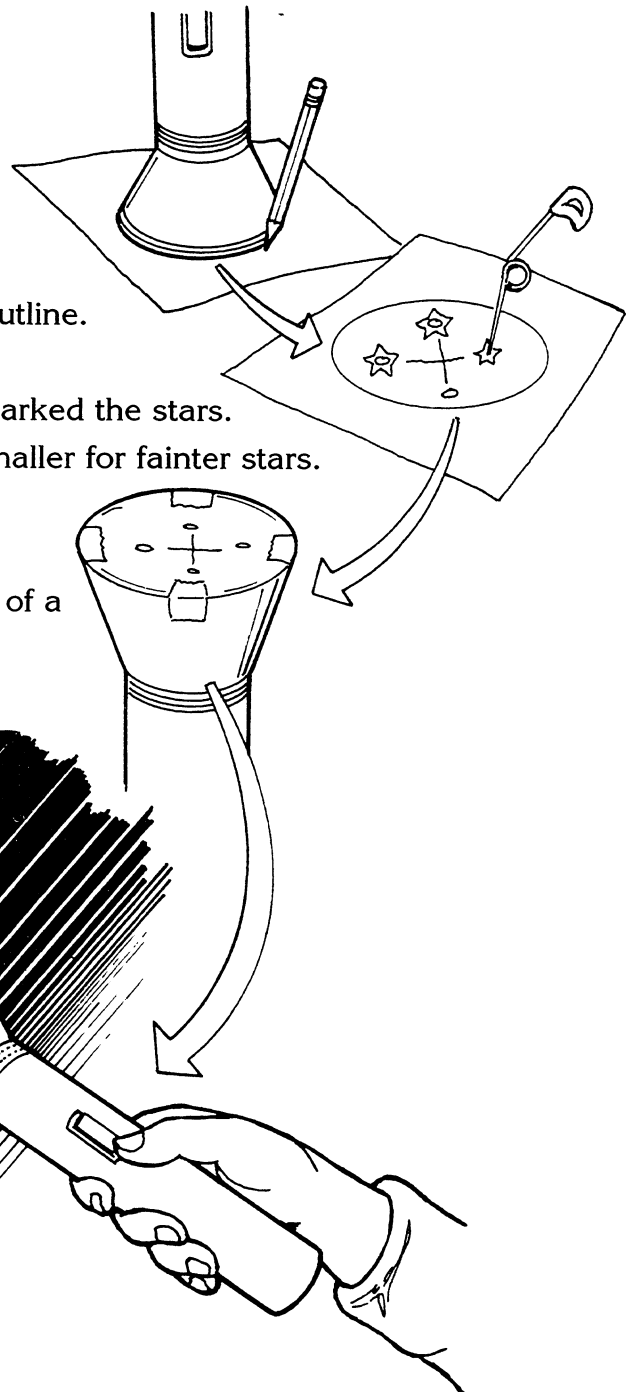
A star projector will shine the stars onto the ceiling. This is helpful in learning the constellations as well as a lot of fun.

Material

1 torch, 1 piece of paper,
1 safety pin, sticky tape, 1 pencil

Directions

1. Outline the head of the torch on the paper.
2. Mark the stars you wish to project within the outline.
3. Straighten out the safety pin.
4. Use the safety pin to make holes where you marked the stars.
Make the holes bigger for brighter stars and smaller for fainter stars.
5. Cut out your new star chart.
6. Tape the star chart to the head of the torch.
7. Shine your new star projector on to the ceiling of a dark room.



Extensions

- Visit a planetarium to learn more about the stars.
- Learn the stories behind the constellations.
- Compare the stars in the southern sky to those in the northern sky.
- Visit an observatory.



Waltzing Matilda

In 1895, Andrew Barton (Banjo) Paterson published *The Man from Snowy River and Other Verses*. Even though he was virtually unknown before this, he became one of Australia's most famous writers. 'Waltzing

Matilda' has become our unofficial national anthem. Many people think that it should be the national anthem. Read the song now and try to figure out the meaning of 'Waltzing Matilda'.

1. Once a jolly swagman camped by a
billabong,
Under the shade of a coolibah tree,
And he sang as he watched and waited
till his billy boiled,
'You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me!'

Chorus:

Waltzing Matilda, Waltzing Matilda,
You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me,
And he sang as he watched and waited
till his billy boiled,
'You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me!'

2. Down came a jumbuck to drink at the
billabong,
Up jumped the swagman and grabbed
him with glee,
And he sang as he stowed that jumbuck
in his tucker bag,
'You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me!'

Chorus:

Waltzing Matilda, Waltzing Matilda,
You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me,
And he sang as he stowed that jumbuck
in his tucker bag,
'You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me!'

3. Up rode the squatter mounted on his
thoroughbred,
Up rode the troopers – one, two, three,
Where's that jolly jumbuck you've got
in your tucker bag?
'You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me!'

Chorus:

Waltzing Matilda, Waltzing Matilda,
You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me,
Where's that jolly jumbuck you've got in
your tucker bag?
'You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me!'

4. Up jumped the swagman and sprang into
the billabong,
'You'll never take me alive!' said he,
And his ghost may be heard as you pass
by that billabong,
'You'll never take me alive!' said he.

Chorus:

Waltzing Matilda, Waltzing Matilda,
You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me,
And his ghost may be heard as you pass
by that billabong,
'You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me!'

