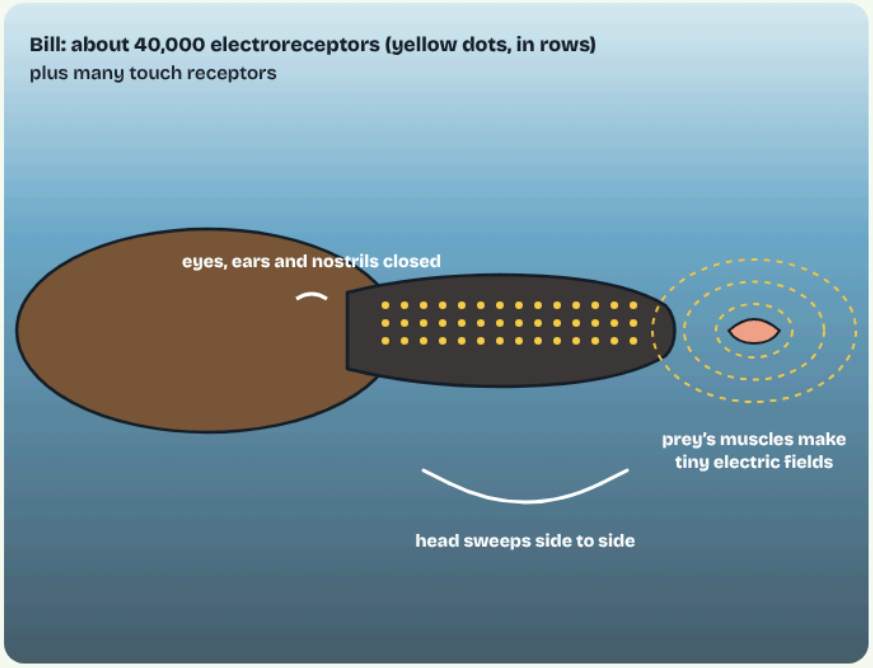
That is why

Why is the platypus so strange?

A mammal that lays eggs, sweats milk, carries venom and hunts by sensing the electricity of its prey.

A Hunting with electricity



Underwater the platypus shuts its eyes, ears and nostrils. It finds small water animals on the riverbed by feeling their electricity and movement with its bill.

B A mammal with odd extras

- **Fur** — mammal
- **Milk for its young** — mammal
- **Lays eggs** — like reptiles
- **Milk seeps from skin** — no nipples
- **Venom spur on males** — rare in mammals
- **Electric sense in bill** — its own invention

Usually two parchment-shelled eggs, 16 to 18 mm long, hatch after about 10 days.

C Key facts

1. **A monotreme**
   One of only five egg-laying mammals, with four kinds of echidna.
2. **Home**
   Rivers and streams, only in Australia.
3. **Size**
   Males can be over 60 cm, bill tip to tail tip.

Genome (2008): its line split from other mammals about 166 million years ago.

Old habits kept, new inventions added: not a mistake of nature.

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