

# The Mystery Mammal

by RV Staff Writer J.C.

Every week someone in my class gets a turn at solving a problem. It's always something different. I'm excited because today it's my turn!

My teacher clapped his hands to get the class's attention. "We have been studying different kinds of animals, so this week's problem will focus on one kind of animal. Abby, it's your turn to play; come on up!"

I got up from my desk and walked to the blackboard where Mr. Franklin had covered up something with a big piece of paper. I was supposed to answer questions that would help me figure out the answer and reveal the photo underneath.

"Ready?" he asked me. You bet I was ready! I loved animals; I was going to get it in no time.

"Okay. Out of the animal groups we've been studying, which one is warm-blooded?"

"Easy! That's the mammals group," I answered.

"Correct! Your problem is guessing which mystery mammal is hiding behind this cover. Here's your first clue: This mammal has four legs and fur."

Uh-oh, I thought. That could be anything! So many mammals have four legs and fur! Dogs, cats, horses, cows, sheep, rabbits, lions, zebras and lots more. "Please, I need another clue," I said.

"Okay," said Mr. Franklin. "This mammal is equally happy in water and on land." He smiled.

That narrowed it down a little. I thought hard. It could be a few animals. Maybe it was a beaver or an otter? It could be a hippopotamus, but they don't have much hair. Maybe the answer was a type of bear, like a polar bear! I could take a guess, but I needed more information. I sighed. "I think I might know, but I would like another clue, please" I said. I was feeling nervous. I wanted to guess it this time!

Mr. Franklin said, "This animal has a long snout that is unique for a mammal."

What a confusing clue! A mammal with a long snout? That could be an armadillo. But I was pretty sure they don't love the water – did they? It could be one of those funny-looking, proboscis monkeys with the big noses. They might swim. I thought about dolphins and got excited, before I remembered they don't have four legs and fur. What about an elephant – they do like the water! Was that my answer? "Is it an elephant?" I asked. My classmates were nodding too; they all thought I had the right answer. I was surprised when Mr. Franklin shook his head.

“Great deduction, Abby, but that’s not the right answer yet. I’ll give you one last clue. This is one of the only mammals in the world who lays eggs.”

Almost all mammals had live births instead of laying eggs, so now I was stuck. I scratched my head. I made a face. I tried to think very hard. A mammal with four legs and fur. One who likes the water as much as the land. A mammal with a unique long snout. And one who lays eggs like a crocodile or a duck. Think, Abby, think! Then an image popped into my brain, and I knew it! I knew the answer!

“It’s a duck-billed platypus!” I shouted. “It has to be!” Mr. Franklin laughed and nodded. He revealed the photo of the unusual creature with brown fur, four short legs, and a strange-looking snout that looked like a bit like a beaver, an otter, and a duck combined into one.

“Yes!” I pumped my fist in the air triumphantly. My friends clapped, and Mr. Franklin gave me a high five as I went back to my desk.

**Questions**

1. Who is telling the story?
2. What is one characteristic of a mammal?
3. Name two mammals mentioned in the passage that are happy on land and in water.
4. Name two other mammals in addition to the platypus that have a long snout.