

## YZC Animal of the Month, August 2010

### Long-nosed Echidna

*Zaglossus bruijnii*



As you can see, *Zaglossus bruijnii*, the long-nosed echidna, has a long snout that curves downwards. It has no teeth

Head downstairs and into the room at the back of the lower gallery to find a display of some of the most peculiar mammals you are likely to meet – the monotremes. Unlike most mammals, monotremes lay eggs. However, they do have fur, and produce milk to feed their young like other mammals.

Monotremes are found only in Australia and New Guinea. There are only 3 types alive today: the duck-billed platypus and 2 types of echidna, also known as spiny anteaters. All three of these are bizarre looking animals, and when the platypus was first brought back to Britain people thought it was a fake made up of bits of several different animals.

but instead its tongue has a central groove lined with rows of tooth like structures made out of the same stuff as your fingernails. Although they are sometimes called anteaters, long-nosed echidnas actually eat mostly earthworms, using the spikes on the tongue to grip them.

The long-nosed echidna is found only in New Guinea. Here they live in tropical forests. However, the number of long-nosed echidnas is decreasing. These amazing and unusual animals are endangered. Being hunted for their meat and loss of their habitat through conversion of forest to farmland together threaten this species with extinction.