Australian Lungfish

Scientific Name: *Neoceratodus forsteri*
Class: Sarcopterygii
Order: Ceratodontiformes
Family: Ceratodontidae

The Australian Lungfish grows to a length of 5 feet and can weigh more than 20 pounds. It has large scales and lobed, paired fins fringed with rays retaining the primitive characteristic of being more numerous than the supporting bones. The dorsal, caudal and anal fins are confluent (run together). It is the most primitive of all lungfish. It has only one lung and possesses functional gills. While the African lungfish can live for up to 4 years out of water, the Australian variety can exist for only a short time in atmospheric air. The gills are normally used for respiration, but atmospheric air can be breathed in adverse conditions. They are considered living fossils surviving since the time of the dinosaurs. Reproduction has been observed in shallow water in August. Although native to two small river systems, stocks have been transplanted into other Australian rivers.

Range
Australia

Habitat
Oceania; Australia in Burnett and Mary River systems. Southeastern Queensland.

Gestation
3-4 weeks

Litter
50- 100 eggs in a clutch

Behavior
Australian lungfish are primarily carnivorous and use electroreception to find hidden prey. It uses both its gills and lungs to breathe when required. The Australian lungfish is aggressive in nature and attack any aquatic animal if in need of food. They only have one lung and are nocturnal.

Reproduction
The lungfish spawns from August to October. Eggs resemble small transparent grapes and are frequently found attached to floating strands of water-hyacinth. Spawning occurs three phases: in the first, a pair of fish move together, roaming about an area, presumably in search of a suitable spawning site; in the second presumably the male follows the female, nudging her flanks; finally, the fish plunge through the surrounding weed, the male following the female and fertilizing the eggs as they are shed.

Wild Diet
Frogs, tadpoles, small fishes, snails, shrimp, earthworms, and plant material.