

North Central Waterwatch Story of Change

Tony Brown 2021



North Central Waterwatch and the Native Fish Recovery Plan coordinate and deliver a citizen science program called RiverScan. The aim is to get the community involved in waterway management, with a specific focus on monitoring river health for native fish.

Citizen scientist Tony Brown joined the program in early 2019 when another volunteer program he was involved in ended. *"I have always been an outdoorsy type of person; I get very annoyed with all the environmental degradation that I see about the place, so I like to help out where I can,"* Tony said.

"I heard on the radio that the RiverScan project was calling for more volunteers and I thought, that's it, that's for me".

Before getting involved in Waterwatch, Tony said he didn't know much about waterway health *"Participating in RiverScan has helped me to learn a bit more about water quality issues like salinity and high phosphorous and their impact on the environment."*

Tony said his love for the bush came from his dad, and he's passed that on to his son. *"I spend quite a bit of time camping and feel connected to nature when I'm under the stars."*

Since Tony's involvement in the project, he's now found a new favourite fishing and camping spot. *"I monitor a site on the Loddon River, it's a really pretty spot, but I'm about to take up an additional site a bit closer to home, too."*

Peter Rose, Native Fish Recovery Project Manager at the North Central CMA says, *"Southern pygmy perch were once a common species in north central Victoria, but over the past 40 years or so, numbers have drastically declined. Altered flows, lack of seasonal flooding to connect waterways to wetlands where they breed, habitat loss and predation and competition with pest fish species,*


especially carp and redfin, have seen a huge decline in this and other small fish species.

"We partner with the Australian and New Guinea Fishes Association (ANGFA), Native Fish Australia and City of Greater Bendigo to coordinate a breeding program of the southern pygmy perch, with the aim to re-distribute them throughout the catchment".

Tony recently helped out with a release of one-hundred southern pygmy perch into a permanent pool on the Sheepwash Creek, where he will monitor on a monthly basis to ensure the water quality remains healthy. After learning of their impact, he now also plans to fish for carp and redfin at the site, to help ensure the survival of his new little pygmy pals.



Tony with southern pygmy perch fingerlings, ready for release



Tony is also an active member of the Friends of Strathfieldsaye Streams and Land (the 'FOSSALs'), who get together every Tuesday to clear exotic trees and woody weeds, and plant native vegetation in the Strathfieldsaye area. *"Every little bit helps,"* Tony said, *"Wherever I go, I'll be picking up the tiniest pieces of rubbish. We've cleared so many weeds from the creek edge, locals often mention how it's nice to be able to see the water again".*

Tony is looking forward to seeing an improvement over time. *"I hope my contribution helps, I know it's a long-term thing and I may not see the change in my lifetime, but I hope that one day we see it back to the way it once was. There's good potential, I think we'll know we've got there when we have a good range of fish, it will be healthy again, like mother nature intended."*

The Victorian Government is supporting community partnerships through Waterwatch and other citizen science initiatives to address local waterway priorities. These priorities are being addressed as part of the Victorian Government's \$222 million Water for Victoria investment to improve catchment and waterway health across regional Victoria.



For more information

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