

## A night with Australasian bittern experts

The North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA) invites you to an evening to learn all about the nationally threatened Australasian bittern.

There are less than 1,000 birds remaining in Australia with five per cent located in the North Central CMA region. The CMA's Bringing Back the Bittern project is aiming to see numbers of this cryptic bird rise through increasing and improving their habitat.

The night includes two speakers, Matt Herring from Murray Wildlife and Dr Heather McGinness from CSIRO, and finishes with an optional bus tour to Johnson Swamp to (hopefully) hear some of these cryptic birds calling.



### Matt Herring, Murray Wildlife

Matt has worked as a wildlife ecologist on more than 950 farms in the Murray-Darling Basin. His specialty is wetland management for threatened waterbird species including the 'Bitterns in rice' project and integrating conservation and food production.

### Dr Heather McGinness, CSIRO

Dr Heather McGinness is a senior research scientist at the CSIRO who specialises in floodplain wetland ecology. She has been researching bird ecology in these environments for 10 years and for the last three years has been leading a large project satellite-tracking the movements of straw-necked ibis, royal spoonbills, and white ibis. From this summer Heather will be working with the North Central CMA, Matt Herring, Inka Veltheim, GHCMA and others to track Australasian bitterns.



Australasian bittern (Source: Matt Herring)

### EVENT DETAILS

**Time:** 5.15 – 9.30pm **Wednesday 18 December 2019**

**Venue:** Kerang Tennis Club, (Museum Drive, Kerang) and Johnson Swamp

**Cost:** Free (including dinner)

**RSVP:** By Thursday 12 December for dietary requirements and bus numbers to the North Central CMA via [info@nccma.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@nccma.vic.gov.au) or (03) 5448 7124

**Bring sturdy shoes, long pants and a water bottle if you are coming on the field trip**

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Healthy Parks Healthy People



# COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

Edition 25: Spring 2019

**Welcome** to the 25<sup>th</sup> edition of the Flooding for Life community newsletter. This edition features updates on weed and pest control, threatened species survey, Koondrook Weir fishway progress, an Australasian bittern event and the Cohuna Festival catch-a-carp competition winners!

## Pale-yellow waterlily to be sprayed again this year

The highly invasive aquatic weed, pale-yellow waterlily (*Nymphaea mexicana*), is being targeted along the Gunbower Creek again this summer in a coordinated spraying program with Goulburn-Murray Water (GMW).

The weed is well-known locally for impacting on the recreational and ecological values of the system, by displacing native vegetation, forming a monoculture and blocking waterways. It rapidly colonizes shallow, nutrient-rich waters, resulting in dense infestations that restrict water movement and contribute to silt build-up in the creek.



Infestation of pale-yellow waterlily in Gunbower Creek (Source: NCCMA)

North Central CMA has been working with GMW to control pale-yellow waterlily in Gunbower Creek since 2010. This spraying program has been successful at significantly knocking the weed back. However, funding for spraying ceased when the National Landcare Program ended in June 2018.

Without an ongoing program, gains made over the past several years are at risk of going backward. Recognising the need to continue controlling the weed, the Gunbower Island Community Reference Group have advocated for additional funding for pale-yellow waterlily control and for its listing as a Weed of National Significance, and North Central CMA has been investigating potential funding streams to continue controlling the weed.

Recently, the Gunbower Ramsar committee allocated funding from the Victorian Department of Land, Environment, Water and Planning to control pale-yellow waterlily in Gunbower Creek this year.

While spraying is an important part of controlling pale-yellow waterlily, it is part of a holistic management approach that also involves excluding stock from the waterway and reducing nutrient loads.

Invasive weeds such as African boxthorn, olives and horehound will also be targeted in the forest, as well as fox control to protect turtle nests at key turtle breeding sites. For more information please contact [Rod.White@nccma.vic.gov.au](mailto:Rod.White@nccma.vic.gov.au).

## CONTACT

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The North Central Catchment Management Authority acknowledges Aboriginal Traditional Owners within the region, their rich culture and spiritual connection to Country.

We also recognise and acknowledge the contribution and interest of Aboriginal people and organisations in land and natural resource management.





## Fox control program underway

Fox control will be undertaken around key turtle breeding sites within Gunbower Forest from late November to late December.

North Central CMA has been working with Turtles Australia to identify the highest priority sites for this program. Areas targeted include Black Swamp, Reedy Lagoon, Horseshoe Lagoon, Botches Lagoon and McCutchells Bend.

The aim of the fox baiting program is to protect turtle nests and hatchlings from predation during nesting season. Fox predation is the greatest risk to turtle eggs and hatchlings like the tiny long-necked turtle hatchling pictured below.



A long-necked turtle hatchling found during fish monitoring in Gunbower Forest this spring

## Threatened plants make carp cages home

A recent survey targeting nationally threatened plant species at Gunbower Forest has shown large amounts of river swamp wallaby grass (*Amphibromus fluitans*) within wetland carp exclusion cages.



River swamp wallaby grass in Little Reedy Lagoon carp exclusion cage (Source: NCCMA)

River swamp wallaby grass is a threatened species that needs water to grow and complete its life cycle. However, it is also vulnerable to disturbance by carp and grazers. The photo below shows thick covering of the grass inside a carp exclusion cage at Little Reedy Lagoon.

While it's not uncommon to see this species in some of our wetlands, it is rarely so thick and healthy.

Water for the environment was delivered to high priority wetlands in Gunbower Forest over winter, including Little Reedy Lagoon. The carp cages provide the perfect conditions for river swamp wallaby grass to flourish.

## The Big Cohuna Festival catch-a-carp winners

The catch-a-carp kids fishing competition happened again at the Big Cohuna Festival this year, with 45 kids turning out to try their luck at the event. Seven carp were caught as well as a golden perch and a Murray cod.

The competition winners were:

- Biggest Carp – Zach Van Vuuren
- Smallest Carp – Tyler Wilson
- Most carp caught – Tyler Wilson
- Most interesting catch (Murray cod) – Tom Parsons (pictured)



Tom Parsons, winner of the most interesting catch with a Murray cod

## Koondrook fishway plans in progress

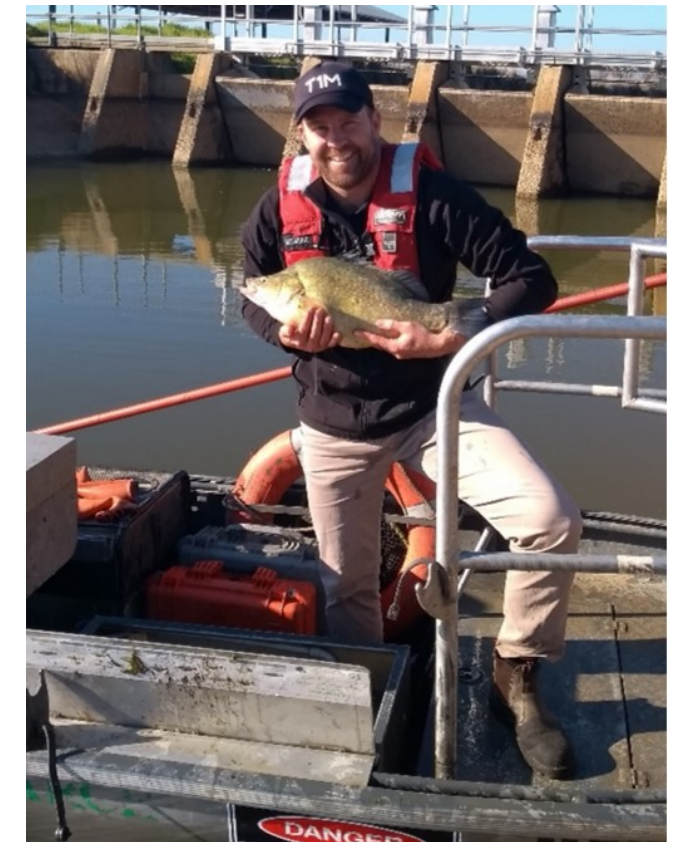
Preparation for the Koondrook fishway is now underway, with the detailed design project on track for completion in March 2020.

Fish ecologists, fishway engineers and Goulburn-Murray Water have been working together to fine tune the fishway design. A 1:12 scale physical model of the fishway was constructed by the Australian Flow Management Group (University of South Australia) to test how the fishway functions under different flow scenarios, and allow real-time alterations and retesting.

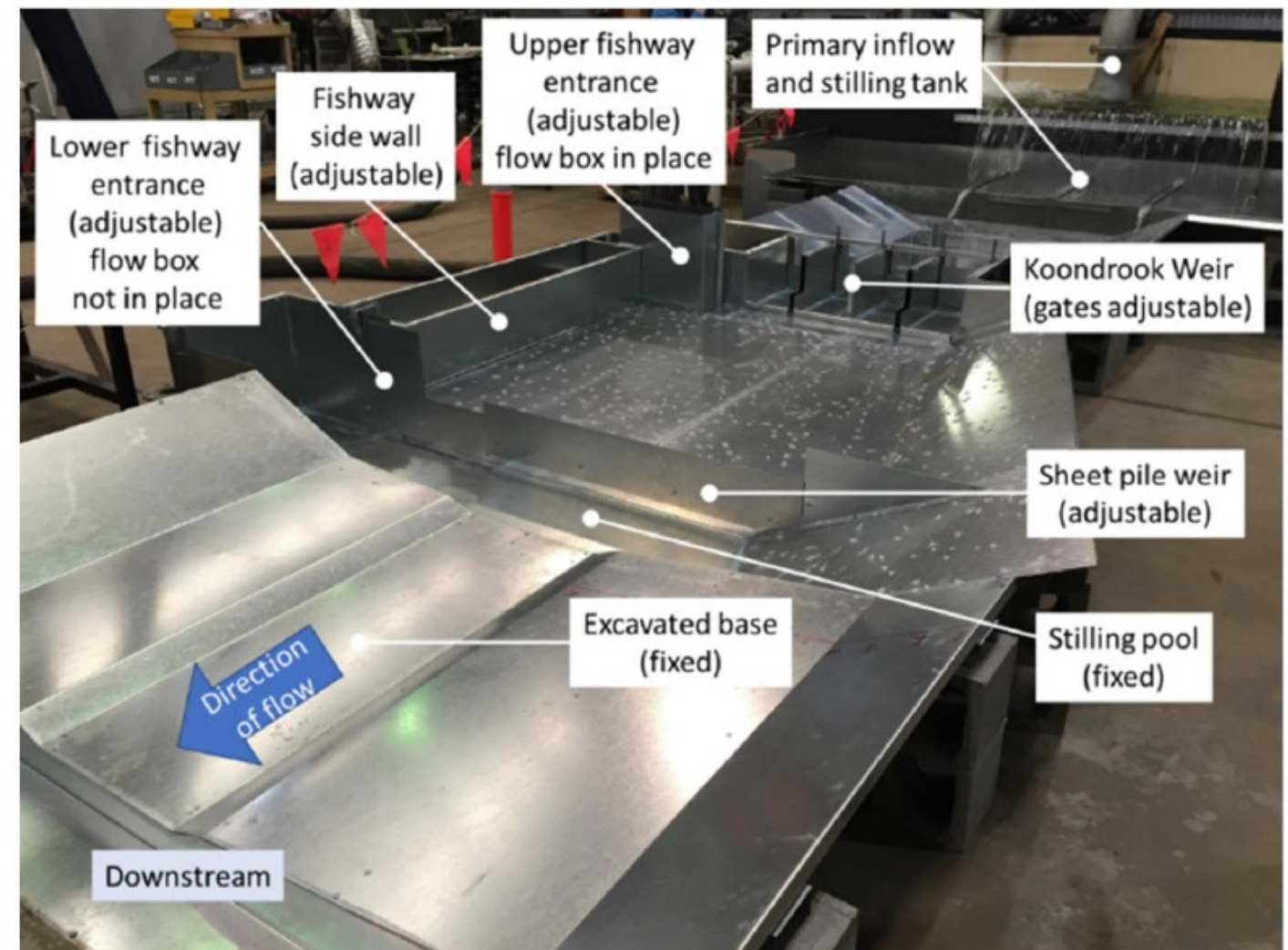
The physical model aimed to confirm fish access to entrances, safe fish exit and safe downstream fish passage, reduce likelihood of debris entering the fishway and prevent any potential safety issues.

Flora and fauna surveys are also underway and a cultural heritage management plan in development.

At this stage, the fishway is planned for construction in winter 2021.



Project Manager Peter Rose undertaking fish surveys at Gunbower (Source: NCCMA)



Physical model of the Koondrook fishway (Source: NCCMA)