

OUR PROJECTS



NORTH CENTRAL
Catchment Management Authority
Connecting Rivers, Landscapes, People

PROTECTING THE BEST

The Kerang Wetlands complex forms an extensive system of over 100 wetlands. It consists of 23 lakes and swamps that cover an area of 9,419 hectares. These wetlands differ widely in permanence, depth, salinity and levels of aquatic vegetation cover.

The Kerang Wetlands are recognised for their representativeness of Victorian wetlands, flora and fauna values and for the system's significance as habitat for a large abundance of waterbirds. Their significance is recognised by their listing under the International Ramsar convention.

The North Central CMA is the lead agency in North Central Victoria coordinating and monitoring natural resource management programs for the region.

ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES

The Kerang Ramsar listed Wetlands support large populations of Australian species and provide habitat for migratory species including large numbers of ducks, Eurasian Coot, cormorants, Australian Pelicans, Ibis and cormorants.

The 23 Kerang Ramsar listed Wetlands support a range of vegetation; over 150 species of Indigenous flora have been recorded with 8 flora species listed as threatened and a further 7 species suspected to be threatened. There are 23 State-threatened and 18 State near-threatened fauna species. The critically endangered Murray Hardyhead is currently found at Round Lake and Woorinen Lake North, outside these locations they have only been identified at two other sites in Victoria.

SOCIAL & ECONOMICAL VALUES

The public land of the Kerang Wetlands area is a very valuable resource for recreation, land and water based activities. The value of the land for recreation partially stems from its natural ecological assets, its flora and fauna, but also from the reliable supply of fresh water which has been brought into the area for irrigation purposes. Activities include bush walking, sightseeing, camping, picnicking, swimming, sailing, waterskiing, boating, fishing and nature study/appreciation. Eight of the wetlands are Water Supply Reserves and three are Salinity Reserves providing significant economic benefits for irrigation and farming. They also provide an economic benefit to the region through tourism with many people visiting annually during the holiday season.

ENHANCING THE VALUES OF THE KERANG RAMSAR WETLANDS



Kerang Ramsar Wetlands, North Central Victoria
Photo: Courtesy Trent Gibson, North Central CMA

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the project is to enhance the biodiversity values of the Kerang Ramsar listed Wetlands through reducing the impact of threatening pests on specific conservation values and biological assets, irrespective of whether they are on private or public land.

- Pest Plant and animal control
- Conservation of the Murray Hardy Head
- Employment of the wetlands enhancement crew
- Fencing off the river
- Restoration and re-vegetation and areas where weeds have been removed
- Community engagement

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

- Strategic weed control focusing on Weeds of National Significance (WoNS) and those impacting on the ecological character of the Ramsar site
- Controlling rabbit populations to reduce grazing pressure
- Fox baiting to reduce impacts on native fauna
- Fencing and revegetation of some areas to exclude grazing by livestock and increase the capacity of treated sites to regenerate.
- Conserving threatened species: Murray Hardyhead
- Monitoring of Turtle and Platypus populations

WHAT IS THE...

RAMSAR CONVENTION?

The Ramsar Convention is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable utilisation of wetlands. It aims to stem the progressive encroachment on and loss of wetlands now and in the future, recognising the fundamental ecological functions of wetlands and their economic, cultural, scientific, and recreational value. It is named after the town of Ramsar in Iran. The Kerang Ramsar listed Wetlands are rated as being of very high value, meeting Ramsar criteria 1a, 1b, 2b, 3a, 3b and 3c; in particular, they support a high diversity and abundance of waterbird species.

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OUR VALUED PARTNERS

This project has been undertaken in partnership with The Department of Primary Industries (DPI), the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE), Goulburn-Murray Water (G-MW), Parks Victoria, Gannawarra Shire Council and the Campaspe Shire Council.

IMPACTS

Historically, the Kerang Lakes have undergone significant changes in water regime since the development of the Torrumbarry Irrigation System in 1896. After the upgrading of the system in 1923, land salinisation became a major problem and shallow water tables became widespread leading to an increase in the salinity levels in many of the wetlands.

Altered catchment hydrology resulting in greater river flows has caused lakes on the Avoca River to fill more frequently causing decline of Red Gum forests. Saline groundwater intrusion from local and regional groundwater tables, saline irrigation tailwater disposal to wetlands and the isolation of wetlands from the natural flood flows is causing increases in lake salinity and associated changes in biota.

Pest plants and animals in the Kerang Ramsar listed Wetlands are common, having benefited from changed land and water management in the region. There are numerous terrestrial and aquatic weed species with boxthorn, tamarisk, willow and spiny rush being most predominant. Foxes and Rabbits are ranked as a very high threat to the Kerang Ramsar listed Wetlands, impacting on flora, fauna and cultural heritage sites.

MURRAY HARDYHEAD RECOVERY ACTION PLAN

This project will implement the Murray Hardyhead Recovery Action Plan. The major activities will include maintaining appropriate watering regimes to the existing wetlands (Round Lake and Woorinen North Lake), continuing captive breeding and translocation programs and conducting monitoring to assess the effectiveness of the Recovery Plan.

The Murray Hardyhead Project is a high priority under the Victorian Threatened Species Program and the implementation of this project will deliver directly on the Biodiversity and Natural Resource Investment Program priorities related to threatened species, specifically 'to improve the viability of rare species and ecological communities'.

Critical activities include: • maintaining the health of existing wild populations; and • maintenance and operation of the captive breeding facility, which provides risk backup for both Swan Hill populations.

PROJECT FUNDING

Funding for this project has been provided from Federal and State governments under the Caring for our Country (CfoC) and Natural Resource Investment Program (NRIP) - 91 Healthy Waterway programs.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

The entire Kerang Wetlands are rich in Aboriginal cultural heritage. To date, over 450 cultural heritage sites have been recorded, with a number of additional sites being identified as a result of the 2009/10 enhancement program. The Wetlands provided reliable sources of water as well as a rich and diverse supply of plant and animal resources for food, medicines, shelter, clothing, and tools. The local Aboriginal community, particularly the Barapa Barapa Nation, continue to have a strong and unique spiritual connection to the area.

IN OUR COMMUNITY



The Wetlands Enhancement Crew at Kerang Lakes
Photo: Courtesy Trent Gibson, North Central CMA

MEET: The Wetlands Enhancement Crew

During 2009 the project engaged an Indigenous work crew to assist with the onground requirements of the project. The Wetlands Enhancement Crew includes representatives from both the Barapa Barapa Nation and the Yorta Nation who are interested in working in the area of environmental and cultural heritage conservation.

The crew has undertaken training in management techniques such as using sprays and chemicals, OHS, plant identification and cultural heritage assessment. The group is now well established and is working full time on the project and its sister project in the Gunbower Forest. Elders from both Barapa Barapa and Yorta Nation have been engaged and have will continue to play an active role in providing technical guidance with regard to cultural heritage challenges faced during the life of the project.

For further information visit: www.nccma.vic.gov.au



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