

**Welcome to the third project update for the *Loddon Stressed River* project for 2010. In the six months since June we have seen a great number of works and community events throughout the project area.**

The record breaking rainfall over the region has resulted in flows and water into parts of the Loddon that have been dry for a number of years. At the time of preparing this newsletter flooding was still occurring. While this has been great for the river; our thoughts are with the farming community that has been impacted by the prolonged effects of flooding.

The result of the rainfall is that most reaches of the river and many wetlands that have held little or no water over the past decade are full and we expect to see a good amount of bird breeding events this year as a result.

Some of our onground works have been postponed as a result of limited access due to the wet conditions. This includes fencing, revegetation and fish monitoring activities. These activities will be postponed until the water recedes and access improves.

The significant flooding in the Loddon, Avoca and Avon-Richardson catchments has caused some damage to riparian fences and revegetation areas. The increased water flow also caused some stream bed and bank erosion.

Following the first floods in September the North Central CMA undertook a damage assessment process of previous work sites and public assets which included direct contact with landholders in the highest impacted areas, aerial imagery analysis and some on ground site assessments. Information that was collected was then used to develop a bid for funding to deliver a flood recovery program.

To date this has included the identification and removal of several large instream blockages in areas that pose a significant risk to public assets, emergency fencing of revegetation sites at threat from stock and more detailed assessment and prioritisation of works.

With the additional flooding in November a second round of impact assessments will be completed by early February. Following the completion of the assessment process, works will begin to repair flood damage where that damage is causing ongoing environmental degradation.

## ONGROUND WORKS JUNE – NOVEMBER 2010

### **Fish Habitat Improvements**

- Reintroduced clusters of large woody habitat (snags) at seven sites along Tullaroop Creek to improve habitat for River Blackfish.

### **Riparian protection and enhancement**

- Installed 33 kilometres of fencing to protect 260 hectares of streamside zone
- Set up 14 off-stream watering systems
- Revegetated 22.45 hectares with native plants
- Six hectares of Tamarix control
- 10 hectares of Willow control

## WHAT'S COMING UP?

An immediate focus of 2011 will be continuing the flood response program and then getting on with the job of delivering the Loddon Stressed River project. Two field days are planned for the Kerang area, one on cultural heritage and one on low impact erosion control works. A survey will be undertaken into the quality of fish habitat in the lower Loddon.

A program will also be delivered to monitor fish usage of the Kerang Weir fishway. The installation of monitoring equipment has so far been delayed due to the height of the river, however the solar panels required to run it are in place and the actual reader should be in place early 2011. Fish tagging will also occur early 2011. The fishway is currently open to fish passage with the high flows and will remain active through the irrigation season.

## GET INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT

The Loddon Stressed River project has funding confirmed until June 2012. Now is the chance to register your details with the project team if you are interested in undertaking riparian management activities on your property. Activities that you may be able to receive funding for include:

- **Riparian fencing**
- **Revegetation**
- **Off-stream watering**
- **Erosion control works**

For more information or to register your details, contact the North Central CMA on 03 5448 7124.

**Landholders wishing to report damage to fencing, revegetation and other works undertaken by the North Central CMA on their properties are asked to please contact reception on 03 5448 7124.**

## FIELD DAYS AND MEETINGS

### Working group meetings

The community working group for the project has met twice over the past six months, in Bridgewater on 20 May, and Jarklin on 6 October.

### Appin South Riparian Management field day

Held at landholder John Hewitt's property on the banks of the Loddon River, 15 people attended the field day to hear speakers, including John Hewitt who spoke about the works he has undertaken on his property and the changes he has noticed.

Other speakers for the day included Leeza Axton (Parks Victoria), Matt Hawkins (DPI Kerang), Glenn Merrick (North Central CMA) and Greg Akers (Department of Sustainability and Environment).



Photo: 'River Ramblings' guided walk along the track at Bridgewater on Loddon

### Eddington Riparian Management field day

Held at Toby Liston's property on Tullaroop Creek, 10 landholders attended this field day where Toby gave an overview of his property and work he has undertaken, followed by a walk to view fencing, revegetation and resnagging works. Other speakers included Greg Akers and Glenn Merrick. Participants then boarded a bus to view two other sites on the Loddon to look at successful fencing and revegetation works.



Photo: Glenn Merrick speaks at Tullaroop Creek

## RIVER RAMBLING

The North Central CMA hosted a guided *River Rambling* walk as part of the Loddon Shire's *Naturally Loddon: A Wonderland in Spring* nature tourism festival.

Fourteen people attended the walk which opened with a *Welcome to Country* by Rick Kerr (Dja Dja Wurrung). Other speakers included Tim Jenkyn (Loddon Shire), Glenn Merrick (North Central CMA) and local artist Kerry Punton who spoke about her tile mural under the rail bridge.

## NATIVE FISH AWARENESS WEEK

During Native Fish Awareness week (14–20 November) the Loddon Stressed River team worked with Fern Hames (Murray Darling Basin Authority Native Fish Strategy & Community Engagement Coordinator) to run an event in Kerang as part of the MDBA's 'Talking Fish' Oral Histories project.

Researcher Jodi Frawley from the University of Technology Sydney, came along to hear from 8 locals about their memories and connection to fishing and the Loddon River. Similar stories are being gathered from the whole Murray Darling Basin as part of the project.



Photo: Kerang locals share memories of the river with agency staff and researcher Jodi Frawley



## PLATYPUS INFORMATION SESSIONS

The Australian Platypus Conservancy (APC) held two Platypus information sessions in Durham Ox on 20 August, and Baringhup on 20 October. 40 people attended each of the events, where the APC presented on the biology and habitat requirements of this unique creature, and advised how community members can get involved in monitoring local populations. Bridgewater and Baringhup Primary Schools were also treated to a visit from the APC.



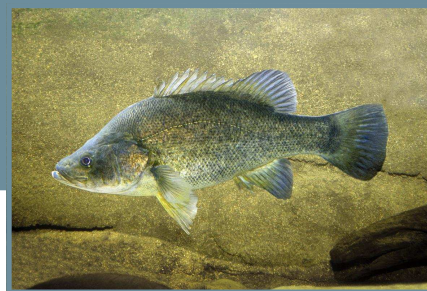
*Photo: Geoff Williams at Baringhup Primary School with 'Patrick' the stuffed platypus*

## FISH OF THE LOWER LODDON RIVER WORKSHOP

A technical workshop was held in October to discuss the current and future status of native fish in the Loddon River downstream of the Loddon Weir.

The workshop, facilitated by Bill Phillips from *RiverSmart* Australia, saw a number of speakers present on the current status of fish in the river, management of flows, barriers to migration, water quality and habitat. The afternoon was set aside for smaller groups to discuss these areas in more detail, and to identify the five most urgent actions required and the five most significant knowledge gaps.

The outcomes from the day will be written up to provide direction for native fish management in the Loddon River.



*Yellow Belly fish  
(photo by Neil  
Armstrong)*

## CHARLES STURT UNIVERSITY SOCIAL RESEARCH PROJECT

In 2009 a study was commissioned to better understand landholder involvement in Loddon river health projects. Information was collected via surveys and interviews. A total of 108 landholders with frontage along the Loddon River participated; this included both those who had been previously involved in projects and those who hadn't.

Landholders were asked to provide information about their previous river health management practices including fencing frontages to manage stock access to waterways, watering stock off-stream, establishing native vegetation along waterways, managing pest animals and plants, and returning woody habitat to streams.

The study considered the effectiveness of North Central CMA river health projects on the Loddon River, why some landholders chose not to be involved in river health projects and the factors influencing long term commitment by landholders to river health project outcomes.

The research found that project participants have a better understanding of river health issues, are more confident in practices such as installing off stream watering points and fencing to manage stock access; and are implementing these at higher levels than non-participants. It also found that the cost of materials and equipment to carry out work was an important constraint to project involvement by non-participants. The study reinforced the good management practices currently undertaken by landholders and the general high level of concern for the health of the Loddon River.

Findings from the study will be used to guide Loddon River health projects and to ensure ongoing and lasting change can be achieved along the river. The full report and a summary of findings can be found on the North Central CMA website [www.nccma.vic.gov.au](http://www.nccma.vic.gov.au) – follow the links to Current Projects, Loddon Stressed River.

## SEPTEMBER FLOODS ...IN PICTURES



Above: Loddon River at Serpentine  
7/9/2010 (photo by Adrian Martins)



Above: Loddon River at Loddon Weir  
6/9/2010 (photo by Adrian Martins)

## WETLAND PHOTOS



Above: Lake Meran almost dry on the 7/9/2010, and near full on the 11/12/2010 (photos by Bridie Velik-Lord)