

North Central WaterWatch Story of Change

Frank Steele, 2023



WaterWatch
Victoria



Frank at one of his adopted sites in 2021

Frank Steele is a dedicated North Central WaterWatch volunteer who has been diligently monitoring his adopted sites since 2012. All three sites are on Bullock Creek near Lockwood, in the Loddon River catchment west of Bendigo.

Frank has always been a keen conservationist, and first heard about WaterWatch through his involvement with the Upper Spring Creek Landcare Group, who had been monitoring Bullock Creek since 1995. Given his professional background in analytical chemistry, Frank thought he suited the role of a WaterWatch volunteer perfectly.

"I became aware of the fact the Landcare group was doing some sort of survey on a couple of the local creeks. They asked for hands up, and I put mine up, and said 'right, I'd like to do that,' and I was lucky enough to get to look after Bullock Creek."

Before Frank began with the program, he didn't have much of an understanding of his local waterway. Since becoming involved in WaterWatch, Frank has become more aware of the natural variations, seasonal differences and long-

term fluctuations that occur within just a small part of Bullock Creek.

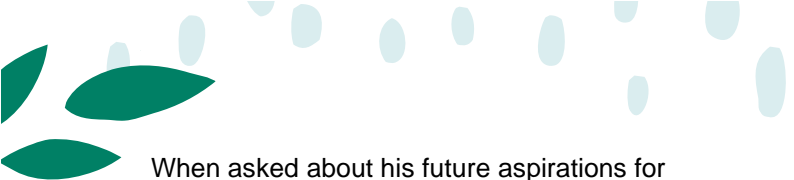
Given his scientific background, Frank understands the importance of regular monitoring, and how it can convey the history of a site.

"It's very important to monitor a creek even when it seems boring and dry. My records of Bullock Creek's dryness are going to be very significant for evaluating the effects of climate change."

Frank loves the opportunity to snap a picture of his sites to demonstrate the contrast between times of total dryness and those in flood,

"I can go to the creek 12 months in a row and it [will] be absolutely bone dry, but the photo that I take really puts it on record. You can go look at that photo in any number of years' time, and say 'hm, we were running through a really bad dry season at that time,'"

Frank's appreciation for the chemical testing aspects of the program is something he appreciates. He notes that it's an exciting time when there's water in the creek, as he starts to see a correlation between the data collected and visual and climatic observations.



When asked about his future aspirations for WaterWatch, Frank hopes more emphasis is put on monitoring frequency. He touched on the significance in evaluating sites over time, and how this builds a pattern of knowledge of not just a site, but the catchment as a whole, which will help catchment managers respond to emerging threats.

Being involved in WaterWatch is a fantastic opportunity to make a difference in the community. Frank is glad to be contributing data and evidence to help in the response to climate change, as well as being able to indulge his love of environmental science during retirement.

Being involved in the Great Australian Platypus Search in 2021 was a highlight of his time in WaterWatch. While he didn't expect to find any evidence of platypus in Bullock Creek, Frank was nonetheless happy to get involved in collecting samples to be tested for the presence of environmental DNA (eDNA) to help map the distribution of platypuses in Victorian waterways.

“They were very specific about the points they wanted checked out, and it was quite a high-tech system they had for doing that evaluation. I thought that was a real buzz to be doing a platypus survey, right here in Bullock Creek in Bendigo.”

Whether it's chemical testing, waterbug monitoring, or eDNA analysis, there are no shortage of scientific experiences to be had as a WaterWatch volunteer.

Frank's commitment to our local waterways is the spirit which drives the WaterWatch program. Well done both on your care for scientific consistency, as well as your stewardship of Bullock Creek. The creek itself might see a lot of seasonal change, but the accuracy of your results certainly do not!

If you'd like to see a digital version of Frank's story, follow the link below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3jXix-Paizs>



Bullock Creek (Yunah Road) 1 Feb and 5 Oct 2013



Bullock Creek, Yunah Road (BUL140)



October 2018



November 2022

Bullock Creek, Calder Alternate Highway (BUL120)



April 2019



October 2022

Bullock Creek, Stewarts Bridge (BUL180)



April 2019



October 2022