

## Freshwater Fisheries Management Update

### Statewide Recreational Fishing Roundtable

25 March 2022

#### Bringing back Macquarie perch!

- Macquarie perch populations continue to be given a huge boost thanks to record fish production and stocking efforts and habitat restoration!
- This year, the Snobs Creek Hatchery team did an incredible job to produce 145,000 Macquarie perch, which were released into:
  - **Goulburn River (58,000)**
  - **Ovens River (40,000)**
  - **King River (15,000)**
  - **Buffalo River (15,000)**
  - **Cudgewa Creek (15,000)**
  - **Lake Dartmouth (2,200)**
- Habitat restoration, including community tree planting and the installation of complex structure such as snags and boulders has been conducted at Cudgewa Creek and the King River.
- These efforts to recover Macquarie perch are supported by the State Government's Go Fishing in Victoria Plan, Recreational Fishing License fees and a Landcare Led Bushfire Recovery Grant, supported by the Australian Government's Bushfire Recovery Program.
- Thanks to our fantastic partners including the Women in Recreational Fishing (WIRF) Network, Corryong Angling Club, Ovens and Upper Murray Landcare Networks, Taungurung Land and Waters Council, North East CMA and DELWP.



## Murray Codference 2022

- The Murray Codference was once again a roaring success this year, with the sixth conference being held in Shepparton last month on 27 February 2022.
- COVID settings of the day made for a smaller but no less passionate and enthusiastic crowd, with just over 200 people able to attend, along with speakers which included keynotes Thomas Pinter, two-time winner of the Mulwala Classic, and 'Eildon cod whisperer' Kate Norman.
- If you missed out on being there on the day, or are keen to rewatch all the talks, they can be accessed on the VFA YouTube page: <https://www.youtube.com/c/VictorianFisheriesAuthority>



## Blackfish stocking

- River blackfish, one of our highly valued and priority native species of fish, received a boost to local populations last Saturday with the release of 16 adult fish adjacent Cooriemungle Creek. The day was attended and celebrated by the local community, Corangamite CMA, researchers and the VFA – with many helping hands to assist in the safe release of the fish.
- The fish were successfully bred in captivity and released by Native Fish Australia member Stephen Mueller, and we celebrate and congratulate him on his perseverance and passion for this achievement – one of the very few times captive bred blackfish have been released in Australian history.
- The VFA has worked to achieve improved management and recovery of blackfish through recent work with recreational fishers (including Native Fish Australia and VRFish) to give blackfish better protection by reducing the recreational bag limit from 5 to 2 and increasing the size limit from 23cm to 30cm. This ensures anglers can still enjoy blackfish as a recreational species and they are conserved into the future. The VFA has also been working with CMA's to improve blackfish habitat, and the Arthur Rylah Institute to better understand blackfish population genetics.





## Murray cod movement and habitat use to be revealed

- Murray cod are being tracked as part of an exciting new research project to learn more about the species movement and habitat preferences in the Upper Goulburn River that flows into Lake Eildon.
- The project, funded by the VFA, will involve tagging 20 Murray cod in the Upper Goulburn River. Already 13 cod have now been tagged, with the largest fish being a massive 113cm long. A further 7 Murray cod will be tagged in the coming weeks with the help of Murray cod anglers and researchers.
- To detect the whereabouts of those fish once tagged, scientists have deployed 16 listening stations strategically positioned from the mouth of the upper Goulburn River to Kevington and beyond.
- As tagged cod move, their acoustic tags will emit a ping that can be detected by a nearby submerged listening station. At that moment, information about the tagged cod's position, depth and water temperature will be transmitted. Some tags will even provide information on that fish's acceleration.
- The two-year project is a great example of applied research to unlock secrets and bust myths about Murray cod, their habits and their movements.
- The findings will give lure casters and bait fishers alike valuable insights into how best to target Murray cod and increase their chances of landing that fish of a lifetime!
- For more information, please contact Dr Corey Green at [corey.green@vfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:corey.green@vfa.vic.gov.au) and stay tuned for further updates.



## Australian Trout Foundation unlocking secrets about trout temperature

- The Wild Trout Fisheries Management Program continues on in 2022 thanks to the passionate work of the Australian Trout Foundation (ATF) and your recreational fishing licence fees.
- A key project delivery component this year is the collection of water temperature information in priority trout streams to be made available to fishers so they can plan their trips with the best chance of success.
- Water temperature is known to have a large impact on trout feeding and populations so revealing this information for key Victorian trout streams will provide unprecedented insight for trout fishers and for managing trout fisheries into the future.
- Dr Brett Ingram (VFA) is working closely with DELWP and ATF to make these data available live online for trout fishers to easily access live.
- Congratulations to Terry George, Paul Stolz and the ATF team on continuing to lift the bar on recreational fisher understanding and engagement in managing the Victorian wild trout fishery



## Record estuary perch stocking in 2022

- Records continue to tumble in fish stocking with more than 410,000 estuary perch stocked this year into seven waters including:
  - **Gippsland Lakes (140,000)**
  - **Maribyrnong River (120,000)**
  - **Barwon River (113,700)**
  - **Lake Tyers (25,000)**
  - **Aura Vale Lake (5,000)**
  - **Bemm River (5,000)**
  - **Snowy River (5,000)**
- We've now stocked estuary perch into 20 waters across the state and they continue to produce great fisheries – just check out the catches coming from Devilbend Reservoir and Albert Park Lake.
- Considering estuary perch live to at least 42 years of age, expect these fish to provide amazing fishing for decades to come.





## Maribyrnong River Fishery Revival Habitat Installation

- The habitat is in! 34 new native fish habitat structures have been installed into the Maribyrnong River to provide amazing habitat and fishing for species including estuary perch, black bream and Mulloway in the heart of Melbourne.
- The habitat structures were made from repurposed felled hardwood timber, rock and concrete thanks to donation from the Cherry Creek Youth Justice Centre Project the construction efforts from the Hopkins Correctional Centre.
- The installation process occurred over two weeks in November 2021 led by the VFA and expert installers. The installation period concluded with a celebratory ministerial event with recreational fishers, angling clubs and project partners including DELWP, Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria and local councils.
- The habitat structures extend from Avondale Heights to the Flemington Racecourse and will be home to the 328,000 estuary perch stocked in the Maribyrnong River since 2018.
- The multi-tiered Maribyrnong River Native Fish Revival Project includes fish population and fish habitat surveys, estuary perch stocking, habitat installation, connection with community and improvements to fishing access including plans for a new boat launching facility.





## Arcadia Native Fish Hatchery

- After completing all pond earthworks, aerators, standpipes and water filling pipework has been installed in all plankton ponds.
- 15 plankton ponds have been filled with bore water, fertilized, aerated and stocked with Murray cod and golden perch larvae.
- For this first season, until we have a hatchery building and conditioned broodfish in place, we are growing native fish larvae supplied by Snobs Creek.
- So far this season, we have grown and harvested more than 300,000 Murray cod and golden perch fingerlings at Arcadia.
- We've been closely monitoring algae and zooplankton blooms in plankton ponds at Arcadia,
- We are delighted with the growth rates at Arcadia with some golden perch reaching 1.5 grams in just 40 days.
- Arcadia is significantly warmer than Snobs Creek which results in faster growth rates and shorter timelines to complete a harvest cycle,
- We are confident in being able to use each pond at Arcadia at least twice and possibly, even three times each season (September to April).
- Works are underway to construct a concrete slab and hatchery shed that will measure 48 metres x 16 metres.
- The hatchery building will be completed by end June and fitted out in time for the start of the next production season (September).



## Visitors Centre - Arcadia Native Fish Hatchery

- A planning permit has been secured for the construction of a Visitors Centre building at the front of the Arcadia property.
- Tenders for construction have gone out and will close in the next few weeks.
- We are exploring options to convert of turkey nest dam to a family friendly fish out pond.
- We are planning to stock this pond with a range of “ready to catch” native fish including, Murray cod, golden perch and silver perch.

## Native fish salvages

- The VFA has been working closely with Goulburn Murray Water and stakeholders to ensure our valuable native fish are salvaged from decommissioned storages, safely find new homes and go on to contribute to populations and our fantastic fisheries in other waterways.
- One such salvage operation has been undertaken this past month from Greens Lake (near Corop). 61 large golden perch (the largest weighing in at 5.5kg) and 7 Murray cod (of which 3 were over a metre) were salvaged and rehomed in either Waranga Basin, the Goulburn River or kept as broodfish at Arcadia native fish hatchery.
- VFA staff have also been out and about working with local fishers to investigate where native fish might be hiding out (through drone surveillance and physically trudging through almost waist-deep mud) and could be saved and relocated from Third Reedy Lake, which since 2019 has been progressively drawn down as part of GMW's 'Connections Project'. In addition to the 1,600 native fish previously salvaged, and additional 20 golden perch and 6 cod have been salvaged this past week.



**If you have any questions or comments about these or other projects, feel free to get in contact with the Freshwater Fisheries Management Team:**

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