

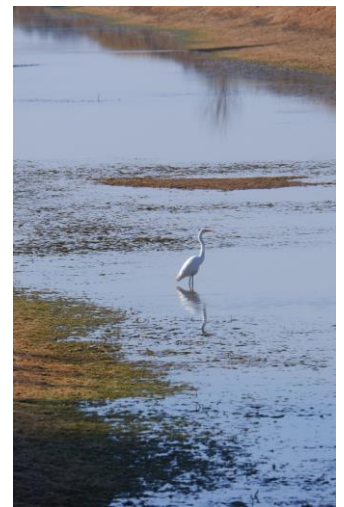
Freshwater Fisheries Management Update

Statewide Recreational Fishing Roundtable

3 July 2020

1500 native fish salvaged from irrigation channels

- This year we've teamed up again with Goulburn Murray Water and salvaged native fish from 16km of irrigation channels near Cobram and 5 siphons in the Shepparton Irrigation area.
- To date we've saved an incredible 1,500 native fish including:
 - 1,263 Murray cod (2 to 95cm),
 - 88 golden perch up to 50 cm (3 kg plus),
 - 188 blackfish.
- Most fish were translocated into nearby public waters with the help of local anglers.
- 50 golden perch and 40 Murray cod were retained in dams for future broodstock at the new native fish hatchery.
- The salvage has been a great initiative to return these fish to public waterways for breeding and fishing, that would otherwise be lost in the system!



Record 8 million fish to be stocked this year

- This year's draft stocking plan for 8 million fish across 13 species has been prepared and distributed to 130 attendees of Vic Fish Stock forums for comment.
- Comments have been received and are currently being assessed for production of the final stocking plan in the Vic Fish Stock report.



Bushfire Recovery

- In the wake of this summer's devastating bushfires we have met with ATF, NFA, VRFish and local anglers regarding recovery of river systems and fisheries in the north east.
- Encouragingly, some signs of recovery are evident however we have planned surveys of affected rivers/creeks (Corryong, Nariel, Cudgewa) along with stocking trials for trout and Murray cod.
- Stocking trials will likely include the use of NSW Gaden/Jindbyne/Thredbo River strain brown trout.
- Anglers will be engaged in the surveys and stocking trials, with results presented at Talk Wild Trout Conference and Murray Cod Conference.



Tarago Reservoir

- A key election commitment made by the Premier of Victoria and listed under Target One Million was to allow recreational boating access at Tarago Reservoir.
- VFA have commenced partnership discussions with Melbourne Water to progress this commitment, starting with a fish population survey this winter to benchmark the species present, including size classes, condition of fish, recruitment and genetics.
- Historically Tarago Reservoir and its tributaries supported a popular and productive brown trout fishery, which was highly valued by the community, so we are looking forward to again finding out what lies beneath!



Record growth of golden perch in Wetland stocking trial

- A pilot stocking trial into a wetland in northern Victoria has revealed extraordinary growth from golden perch.
- In January 2019 VFA collaborated with a CMA and Traditional Owners and stocked a waterway with golden perch that was receiving environmental water. In June 2020 a survey found thirty-five plump golden perch ranging from 30 to 35 cm.



- Otoliths from these fish revealed they were 1+ year old fish, representing record growth that would usually take around 3 years. We anticipate these fish are likely to be from our stocking and we are now doing otolith microchemistry to confirm.
- These early results suggest the incredible growth of fish and a great opportunity to demonstrate the benefits of environmental water to native fish and recreational anglers. We can't reveal the location of the wetland until the stocking trial is completed, but stay tuned for further updates...

Maribyrnong River revival project

- The Maribyrnong River Fish Habitat Installation Plan has been completed nominating 8 key sites (from 35) along the Maribyrnong river (between Avondale Heights to Flemington racecourse).
- Habitat is currently being investigated including rock (Department of Justice), natural woody structures, with elements of concrete structures used for in-water stability.
- 208,000 estuary perch have been stocked so far and a further 100,000 planned next summer.
- OzFish Unlimited will deliver final historical review report in July/August 2020.



Inter-Valley Transfers and our precious native fisheries

- 'Inter-Valley Transfers' or IVT's are the transfer of large volumes of water down the Goulburn River for downstream irrigation demands, which are impacting native fish, the environment and community values.
- Recent unpublished modelling by the Arthur Rylah Institute suggest a doubling of summer flows from IVT's is likely to decrease Murray cod recruitment by up to 30% per annum.
- The Goulburn River also supports valuable populations of threatened trout cod, golden perch, and silver perch, as well as Murray Spiny Freshwater Crayfish. Impacts from high flows are also expected for these listed threatened native species.
- VFA are currently seeking further scientific information from ARI fish ecology experts on impacts from IVT's on nursery habitats for larval and juvenile threatened fish species.
- The VFA and recreational fishing groups are continuing to advocate that base flows be maintained below 1,000 ML/day to protect native fish populations, fisheries, indigenous heritage and community values.



Native Fish Report Cards

- VFA have submitted a Large Grant RFL bid to continue the Native Fish Report Cards Program for the next three years.
- The collaborative bid with DELWP is worth \$750,000, including a \$120,000 contribution from RFL so it's good angler value for money.
- The program surveys 10 rivers across 9 different native freshwater species and gives us unprecedented native fish population health data to track our fisheries, assess management interventions.
- Presented in report cards, the data engages anglers in native fishery improvements and assists in national stock status of these species (underway).



Wild Trout Fisheries Management Program

- The VFA continue to work closely with Terry George and the ATF and the ATF have submitted an RFL bid for phase 3 of the Wild Trout Fisheries Management Program.
- The RFL bid includes nine elements which deliver on many aspects of the Wild Trout Strategic Plan and complement the fantastic work the ATF are doing to restore fish habitat.
- Pending RFL funding announcements, we have started delivering on a brown trout broodstock management plan to assess and maximise the genetic diversity of brown trout at Snobs Creek, with trout fishers finclipping caught wild brown trout to benchmark the genetics of wild stocks.



Conferences - Talk Wild Trout Conference and Murray Codference

- The Talk Wild Trout Conference and Murray Codference series' over the past five years have been tremendously successful (see our webpages [here](#) and [here](#)).
- COVID-19 has presented new challenges for face-to-face angler engagement given social distancing requirements.
- The tentative dates for Murray Codference is Sunday 8 November and Talk Wild Trout is Saturday 14 November.
- We are considering options for hosting conferences digitally or partially digital and will discuss the options with both Trout and Murray cod Fisher Reference groups.



Native Fish Hatchery

- The new property has been purchased – stunning 170 ha at Arcadia on the Goulburn River.
- Owner's Engineer has been contracted and major onsite works will commence later this year.
- Construction is planned to be completed by late 2021 and fish production underway by 2022.
- See Anthony Forster for more details.



Stage 2 – VFA's Native Fish Hatchery (Arcadia)

Target One Million
More Victorian Fish, more often.

Freshwater fishing reports

- Lake Eildon Murray cod continue to get better and better with meter fish of a lifetime being caught daily.
- Prior to the trout river season closing for spawning, high country trout were fishing well, and we should expect that to continue when the season opens. The South West rivers and central Victorian lakes are open year-round and producing cracking brown trout to 2kg.
- The Yarra River remains a hidden fishing gem in the heart of Melbourne. Unnamed sources report a recent sensational session on estuary perch and Mulloway...
- Tiger and cheetah trout stocking in Lake Purrumbete has been a huge success with lots of catches of these beautiful and highly aggressive fish. Just wait until the get BIG!



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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