

Water for the Environment

Summer
2018-19 update

FAB FOUR FROM FLOWS

A little bit of water goes a long way when you combine the latest science with healthy streambanks which link the Grampians to the Wimmera River.

Ongoing research into how waterways respond to water for the environment is helping water managers build a clearer picture of the potential future. And just as The **Fab Four** are recapturing the magic of The Beatles through their tribute band, water for the environment is helping four of the Wimmera's fabulous creatures emerge into the spotlight.

FAB #1 FISH

Researchers have discovered a spike in Wimmera native fish numbers including a rapid spread of the previously declining Southern Pygmy Perch from the Grampians to Horsham. Wet conditions in 2016, combined with regular environmental flows since then, have boosted fish numbers and allowed them to repopulate areas impacted by years of drought. A key factor has been the abundance of aquatic plants that have sprung up in response to the watering. They provide ideal nursery habitat for native fish, providing a place for eggs and young fish to avoid being eaten by predators.



FAB #2 FROGS

A frog species discovered by keen-eared locals Tim Minter and Kevin Bolwell is thriving thanks to timely rainfall and environmental flows. The Peron's Tree Frog, also known as the Maniacal Cackle Frog, was discovered in recent years living and breeding happily in Burnt Creek southeast of Horsham. It's now spread along the Wimmera with reports as far north as Dimboola and as far east as Drung.



FAB #3 PLATYPUS

A small and fragile platypus population in Western Victoria is re-populating new areas of the MacKenzie River with water samples from downstream of the Grampians Gariwerd National Park returning strong platypus eDNA signals where researchers haven't recorded the elusive mammals since the Millennium Drought. This indicates the river system is providing good enough quality habitat to sustain this population and allow it to grow and move downstream into new areas.



FAB #4 CRAYFISH

The rare Glenelg Spiny Crayfish (pictured right) and the Western Swamp Crayfish are thriving thanks to environmental flows in the northern Grampians targeted to help preserve and maintain habitat for native fish and platypus. Regular flows have increased opportunities for them to breed and disperse into new habitats. But they'd better be careful, these small freshwater crayfish are high on the diet list of the platypus and many fish species!



Don't forget to put your photos on social media using #wimmerariver #wimmerawaterways so we can share them!



SUMMER WATERING

As in previous years, there will be a hiatus in flows over the Christmas-New Year break. Low flows for the MacKenzie River and Burnt Creek through to Wonwondah and the Wimmera River from Taylor's Lake are planned to start in early 2019. Low flows for the Mt William Creek are planned to start at the end of January. Plans may change based on extreme rainfall or heat. Dry conditions since 2016 mean the volumes released are less than previous years.

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