

# The Floodplain Babbler



VICTORIAN MURRAY FLOODPLAIN  
RESTORATION PROJECT  
HEALTHY LANDSCAPES, STRONG COMMUNITIES

## What's been happening at VMFRP

EDITION #4  
MARCH 2022



Hattah Lakes is recognised as an internally significant wetland and is Ramsar-listed.

## Celebrating wetlands

According to the UN, wetlands are the unsung heroes of the world. They store more carbon than any other ecosystem and could be instrumental in helping us adapt to climate change.

Despite their potential, wetlands remain the world's most threatened ecosystem. With 35% of global wetland area lost since 1970, they are disappearing three times faster than forests, leaving more than a quarter of wetland species threatened with extinction.

**World Wetlands Day** is celebrated every year on 2 February to raise global awareness about the vital role of wetlands for people and planet.

Our Murray River floodplains are home to several wetlands recognised as important, both nationally and internationally. Unfortunately,

as we've changed the way the river flows over time, we've reduced the flows needed to keep these wetlands healthy.

The infrastructure we plan to build at these sites will allow natural flows into the floodplains, as well as being able to hold water there for as long as needed to support the environment, before returning it to the river.

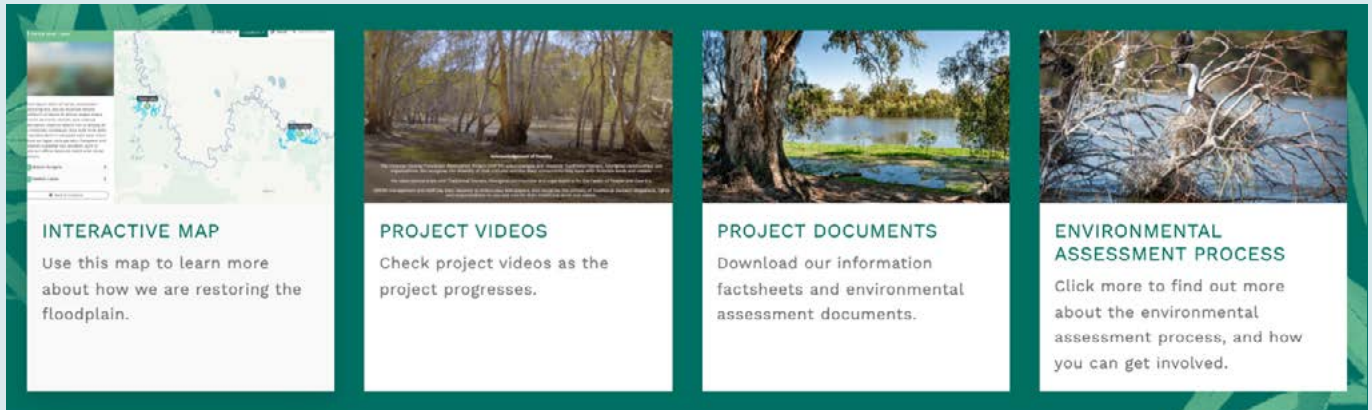
**Read more** about the birds flocking to Murray River floodplain wetlands across northern Victoria following recent deliveries of environmental water.



**Want more news?** Subscribe online  
at [vmfrp.com.au/register](https://vmfrp.com.au/register)

# VMFRP portal goes live!

Check out our new **EES portal** with everything you need to know about the Environmental Assessment process. It includes an interactive map, videos and other useful resources.



## Preparing Planning Scheme Amendments

Each municipality in Victoria is covered by a planning scheme that regulates the use, development and protection of the land. A planning scheme can only be changed by a formal amendment process. This usually consists of public exhibition of the draft amendment, followed by a panel review and submission to the Minister for Planning for a decision.

The works planned under VMFRP trigger several planning approval requirements. Draft planning scheme amendments are currently being prepared for the Campaspe, Gannawarra, Swan Hill and Mildura planning schemes. They will be exhibited concurrently with the EES and ER documentation later in 2022, giving the community the opportunity to have their say.

Draft planning scheme amendments are one part of a **package of approvals** needed before VMFRP construction can begin.

For more information on the planning process in Victoria, visit **DELWP's planning website**



## Floodplain cultural values

All of the Murray floodplains have significant cultural value for the Indigenous community, including the use of water and Country. This is why Traditional Owners and Aboriginal interested parties are carrying out cultural heritage assessments at each of the VMFRP sites.

Getting water onto river country is a stated aspiration of Indigenous groups along the Murray. In partnership with Traditional Owners, work was undertaken to acknowledge cultural values and uses of northern Victorian river country through discussions as part of **Victoria's Northern and Murray Water Resource Plan undertaken as part of the Basin Plan**.

Watch the video to hear from Isaiah Firebrace, singer-songwriter, winner of X-Factor 2016 and 2017 Eurovision Song Contest entrant, as he talks about his connection to Country and the importance of restoring floodplain spaces.





# Engaging with the community

VMFRP project team members have been out and about after the summer break. Our travelling van, Edna Queen of the Floodplain (shown in all her splendour in the photo below) spent three glorious days at the **Nyah Fishing Competition** on 11–13 February hearing peoples' stories about what the floodplains used to be like.

In February, we also visited the Swan Hill and Cohuna Farmers Markets, as well as drop-in sessions at the Wood Wood and Hattah stores. It was great to meet so many people and listen to their ideas and views on the Murray floodplains. Building on the work before Christmas, we have scheduled meetings for March and April with our stakeholder and community advisory groups. These groups are made up of local people that have generously put their hand up to help shape the project.

These meetings will focus on gathering community insight into the technical studies being completed for the Environmental Effects Statements and Environment Reports (EES/ER). This input will add to discussions held with land managers and specialists which have helped shape our investigations. This feedback is being used to develop the EES/ER documentation ready for public exhibition later this year.



Upcoming engagement opportunities are listed at [vmfrp.com.au/get-involved](https://vmfrp.com.au/get-involved)

## Other news

### **Proud sponsor of the Nangiloc Stressless Fishing Classic**

The VMFRP is a proud sponsor of the **Nangiloc Stressless Fishing Classic** on 12–14 March. We look forward to meeting fishing enthusiasts at the competition and hearing your thoughts on floodplain restoration.

### **Ecological monitoring program underway**

**Ecological monitoring** is well underway to understand the health of VMFRP floodplain ecosystems and set baseline data before VMFRP watering begins in 2024. This will enable us to measure the impact and effectiveness of environmental watering programs at the nine sites.

The Mallee and North Central CMAs are working with experts such as the Arthur Rylah Institute (ARI) to undertake monitoring across all nine

VMFRP sites. We even had a mention in **ARI's February newsletter!**

Monitoring data is being used to inform the EES and ER documentation.

**Read more** about the ecological monitoring at Guttrum and Benwell Forests and Gunbower National Park.



Setting a light trap for larval fish on the Lindsay River  
(Photo: Gabriel Cornell, Arthur Rylah Institute)

## #MurrayMoments photo competition winners

Congratulations to the winners of our photo competition: Verna Wakefield, **Braeden Lampard** and Megsy, Matt, Daisy and Jasper of **@TravelTalesBlog**. We loved sharing your #MurrayMoments over summer.



## Meet the team

Each newsletter, we introduce you to one of the faces working at our project partner organisations. Say hello to Susan Saris, the Environment Team Leader at **Lower Murray Water!** Susan's passion for the environment extends outside of work, and she is setting up a new Landcare group to protect the turtles at Kings Billabong.

### Tell us a little about you

I'm from Mildura. Two of my big passions are walking and canoeing. I'm involved in two social clubs – the **Sunraysia Bushwalkers** and **Birdlife Mildura**.

### What do you love about your job?

I enjoy getting out into the bush and seeing new places I might not otherwise have visited. I'm working out at Lake Cullulleraine at the moment, dealing with excessive cumbungi growth and surveying the growling grass frog population.

[Read the full article here](#)



## Floodplain heroes – Bringing back the Bittern

Our floodplain heroes series showcases locals in the Mallee and North Central regions working to restore floodplain spaces. Meet Ken and Jill Hooper who are restoring a complex of wetlands on their 155-hectare property at Murrabit West.

The Hoopers put a Trust for Nature covenant on their former Cohuna dairy farm back in 2008. They've been working tirelessly ever since to restore the wetland habitat, replicating different types of floodplain habitats, such as deep creeks, shallow areas, shallow timbered areas, and shallow lignum.



[Read the full article here](#)



Ken Hooper pictured here with Amy Russell, the Project Manager at North Central CMA at the Hooper's property (Photo: NCCMA)

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