



MEDIA RELEASE

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ELDERS ON BOARD WITH NATIONAL WATERBUG BLITZ AT HATTAH

LOCAL indigenous elders have reconnected to country while doing their bit to monitor the health of the waterways at Hattah-Kulkyne National Park.

The Mallee Catchment Management Authority (CMA) teamed up with freshwater ecologist John Gooderham to host a National Waterbug Blitz field trip to Hattah National Park.

Mr Gooderham, who helped develop the National Waterbug Blitz program, explained the process of conducting a Waterbug Blitz.

The National Waterbug Blitz, which runs throughout spring, encourages “citizen scientists” to collect, identify and monitor waterbugs in an area to help gauge the health of a waterway.

Robinvale indigenous elder Aunty Rose Kirby, who has an affinity for the outdoors, said the day introduced her to the “slimy, little creatures” that live in the water.

“You see those things about, in the water, but you don’t think about them, you don’t know what they do or how they survive,” Aunty Rose said.

“They’re good for the environment, but I didn’t realise how important they were.”

Mallee CMA engagement and education officer Susan Saris said waterbugs - or aquatic macroinvertebrates - were a key indicator of wetland health.

Waterbugs are abundant and diverse, and can be sensitive to changes in water quality, flow regime and habitat conditions.

“A healthy waterway will have a large number of different types of macroinvertebrates present with no one type dominating the system,” Ms Saris said.

“Environmental water activities maintain the habitat that invertebrates need and also provide food.”

Euston elder Aunty Margaret Hannah, who recently became a member of the Mallee CMA’s Aboriginal Reference Group, said the Waterbug Blitz reinforced the importance of all living creatures in an ecosystem.

“It’s a food chain for all our other little animals,” she said.

“I’ll take away a lot of knowledge.”

Ms Saris said monitoring invertebrates would help the Mallee CMA understand how environmental flows influence the range of species present.

The Mallee CMA will use the data collected at Hattah in the site’s environmental water management plan, which over time will build a picture of how the wetlands respond to environmental water activities.

Resources to take part in the National Waterbug Blitz are free and available from waterbugblitz.org.au.



To take part in ongoing monitoring of waterbugs, contact Susan Saris at Mallee CMA.

This project is supported by the Mallee CMA, through funding from the Victorian Government's \$222 million investment over four years to improve the health of waterways and catchments.

Photo Captions:

190911 NWBB_Hattah National Park-33 - Robinvale indigenous elder Aunty Rose Kirby looks for waterbugs with freshwater ecologist John Gooderham.

190911 NWBB_Hattah National Park-37 - A Shield Shrimp which was found in Lake Kramen, Hattah National Park.

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ALL MEDIA INQUIRIES

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The Mallee Catchment Management Authority (CMA) is a statutory authority established to ensure that natural resources in the region are managed in an integrated and ecologically sustainable way. Its work is based on science and delivered through meaningful partnerships with local organisations such as Landcare, community groups, and government agencies in the Victorian Mallee.

For more information visit www.malleecma.vic.gov.au