

Published: 25 November 2013

Murray flood ecology work to aid native fish recovery

Research revealing the secrets of River Murray native fish species is providing valuable insights for future environmental water management.



Credit: Codman/Wikimedia Commons

The research – part of the \$1.5 million [Murray Flood Ecology project](#) – will inform future efforts to conserve and support the river, particularly during extended drought.

Scientists have studied the migration, food chain and habitat of the iconic Murray cod; spawning triggers of golden perch (callop) and silver perch; and monitored the rise in European carp since 2010–12 flood events.

South Australian Agriculture, Food and Fisheries Minister, Gail Gago, said the research presented important data for long-term sustainable solutions for lower River Murray ecosystems.

'This project was commissioned by the Goyder Institute for Water Research in 2010 and studied all aspects of the ecosystem, from fish to plants to water quality,' Ms Gago said.

'The findings will help authorities balance the needs of the community, irrigators, landowners and the environment.

'With so many people relying on and responsible for the river, having the best science on which to base management decisions is a very important part of the picture.'

Project leader, Dr Qifeng Ye from the SA Research and Development Institute (SARDI), said the break of the millennium drought in 2010 was an opportunity to examine ecosystem responses in the main channel and associated floodplain and wetlands.

'The flood event of 2010–11 was a rare opportunity to capture the response of the Lower River ecosystems to over-bank flows,' Dr Ye said.

'Since 2011–12, and into 2013, we have finally started to see a rise in larger native species, but this has been matched by pest species such as carp.

'We need to continue this research over coming years to ensure we know all we can about the 2000 km of river, and how it reacts to flood events as well as man-made impediments and regulations.'

The Murray Flood Ecology Project involved 38 researchers from Goyder Institute partners SARDI, Flinders University, University of Adelaide, CSIRO's Water for a Healthy Country Flagship, University of SA and the SA Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Board.

In related news, Goyder Institute has announced the appointment of a new Director, Dr Michele Akeroyd.

Prior to joining the Goyder Institute as Research Director in 2012, Dr Akeroyd headed up the National Drinking Water Research and Development Program at Water Research Australia.

She spent seven years with the Murray Darling Basin Authority and was responsible for leading the Environmental Delivery program during the height of the Millennium Drought during 2007–08.

Source: PIRSA/CSIRO

From **ECOS** online <http://www.ecosmagazine.com/?paper=EC13272>