

8 April 2019



Nationally endangered fish rediscovered in the Riverland

A small fish listed as nationally endangered since 1999 – the Murray Hardyhead (*Craterocephalus fluviatilis*) – has been discovered at a wetland near Lyrup in the Riverland for the first time in at least five years.

Dr Nick Whiterod, from Aquasave-Nature Glenelg Trust who conducted the fish survey at the site, commented “This is a very important discovery, given that the endangered Murray Hardyhead is under considerable threat and there only are a limited number of known populations of these fish in the Riverland.”

In partnership with the Central Irrigation Trust, Nature Foundation SA’s Water for Nature program delivered Commonwealth water for the environment to the site three times between 2015 and 2018.

“Almost one thousand fish were sampled with both juveniles and adults observed, indicating recent recruitment and some persistence at the site. Although the species is quite salt tolerant, this particular wetland is extremely saline, so I am confident that environmental watering has acted to maintain the population by ensuring suitable habitat and salinity concentrations over the summer months,” Dr Whiterod said.

The Murray Hardyhead is a small freshwater fish, up to 9 cm long, that has once widespread across the Lower Murray River and Lower Lakes but it currently survives in a handful of locations.

Nature Foundation SA President Jan Ferguson OAM commented, “This latest finding of an endangered species at a Water For Nature site underlines the critical importance of delivering water for the environment to smaller sites that can provide habitat and food sources for native fish, frogs and birds – as well as increase the resilience of our beautiful river.”

“It is also a wonderful example of how a not-for-profit environmental organisation can work with local irrigators and achieve results for a healthier working river,” Ms Ferguson added.

The new finding of the fish brings the number of known Murray Hardyhead populations in the Riverland to four, indicating that careful management as well as recovery efforts are required to help ensure their survival.

Nature Foundation SA’s Water For Nature program has been working with Riverland and Murrayland communities since 2008 and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder since 2012, to restore wetlands and floodplains from Renmark to Milang. During this time it has delivered more than 12,000 megalitres of water for the environment to nearly 90 different sites.

Nature Foundation SA has launched a major public appeal to enable us to continue this vital work in helping to restore and maintain the health of the River Murray and its surrounds (see details on page 2).

The Department for Environment and Water funded the fish survey that discovered this new population of the Murray Hardyhead.

About Nature Foundation SA:

Over the past 38 years Nature Foundation SA has invested in conserving, restoring and protecting South Australian landscapes to ensure nature survives and thrives in our magnificent state. We do this by:

- restoring unique habitats and revitalising damaged ecosystems
- saving threatened species
- revitalising wetlands and floodplains along the River Murray with environmental watering
- working with local communities
- funding conservation research projects
- encouraging environmental education and citizen science
- nature-based tourism and geotourism on our Nature Reserves

Current Appeal

Nature Foundation SA has launched a major \$200,000 public appeal to enable us to continue our work helping to restore and maintain the health of the River Murray and its surrounds through environmental watering.

This 'Water For Nature' appeal is a concerted effort to arrest the deterioration of dozens of wetland and floodplain habitats. It builds on many years of success achieved through our environmental watering and conservation programs, which have seen great progress in restoring habitats for vulnerable species. Please visit <https://naturefoundation.org.au/support-us/our-appeals> for further information.

Fast facts:

- Nature Foundation SA has helped protect over 1.1 million hectares of South Australia and is currently working on protecting the next 1.1 million!
- Over 400 post-graduate student grants awarded by Nature Foundation SA continue to yield amazing work and attract wonderful, bright minds to nature science.
- Our Water For Nature Program has delivered more than 12,000 megalitres of environmental water to help revitalise nearly 90 River Murray wetland and floodplain sites.
- Nature Foundation SA manages six Nature Reserves with significant conservation value. This land protects threatened species, builds wildlife corridors and provides a base from which scientific studies can be undertaken.

For media information, high-res images or to arrange an interview, contact:

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Images of the Murray Hardyhead

