

22 October 2019



Tiny fish make big splash for National Water Week

A small fish listed as nationally endangered since 1999 – the Murray Hardyhead (*Craterocephalus fluviatilis*) – has been found spawning and healthy at a Nature Foundation SA Water For Nature wetland site near Lyrup in the Riverland.

The EPBC-listed Murray Hardyhead were first detected at the Lyrup site in April this year, where they had not previously been seen for at least five years.

Nature Foundation SA works closely with Berri Barmera Landcare, who monitor the salinity of the site daily, to ensure just enough water is added at just the right time, to enable the Murray Hardyhead to successfully breed.

Last week the South Australian Murray-Darling Basin conducted another survey and found spawning males and pregnant females of the threatened species.

“It is very exciting news leading into National Water Week. The latest fish monitoring at Lyrup demonstrates that salinity levels are perfect; the fish are spawning and healthy,” said Nature Foundation SA’s Water For Nature Manager Natalie Stalenberg.

“We have been working together with the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder at Lyrup since 2015. A total of 758 megalitres of water for the environment was delivered over four years. Since 2018, the site has been managed to create and maintain the right habitat conditions for this important native fish.”

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. The fish is under considerable threat with only a limited number of known populations in the Riverland.

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.

“Our Water For Nature program helps to protect and restore wetlands and related ecosystems along the River Murray in South Australia. This is vital not only for the health of the River Murray but also for helping us to maintain water quality – one of the 17 sustainable development goals being promoted through National Water Week,” said Ms Stalenberg.

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

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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<https://naturefoundation.org.au/>

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Images of the Murray Hardyhead



Murray Hardyhead eggs found at the site



EPBC listed Murray Hardyhead found pregnant and spawning at the Lyrup site.



Some of the stakeholders involved in the site selection, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of the Murray Hardyhead site in Lyrup. Stephanie Robinson, SA MDB NRM Board. Michelle Campbell, CEWO and Kim, a volunteer Berri Barmera Landcare.