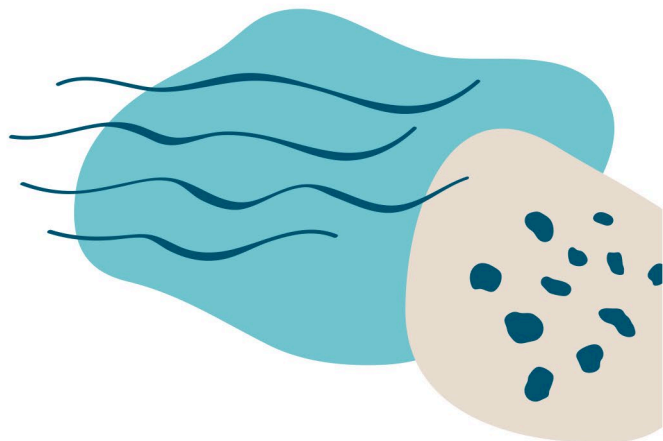


Media Release



22 November 2023

Fish booking into Hopkins River hotels in record numbers

Glenelg Hopkins CMA fish surveys in the Hopkins River this year have shown a 1000 per cent increase in the numbers of some fish species after habitat was installed in the waterway in the last year.

The survey was the first after habitat was installed in the river, and the results suggest the habitat is assisting native fish species retention in the waterways.

Glenelg Hopkins CMA senior waterways officer, Stephen Ryan, said the CMA conducted fish surveys prior to projects starting to get baseline measurements, and then re-surveyed the waterway post-installation to measure the influence of the works.

More than 140 pieces of habitat – like fish hotels and tree root balls – have been installed in the Hopkins and Merri rivers in the last 12 months as part of the project.

These surveys were undertaken in the Hopkins River in Warrnambool around the publicly accessible Deakin University launch area where there has been a large amount of habitat placed in the river.

“Some key highlights from the surveys show a significant increase in the numbers of fish in species such as Bream, Estuary Perch and Mullet,” Mr Ryan said.

Black Bream numbers rose from 115 in the pre habitat survey to a 1065 in post habitat surveying and the numbers of yellow eye mullet caught went from 12 to 1769.

“Additionally, the overall species richness has seen an increase,” Mr Ryan said.

“However, the most compelling aspect of the current findings revolves around the Bream population. The introduction of complex habitat structures has led to a notable increase in the numbers of juvenile Bream,” he said.

Mr Ryan said survey numbers like this were encouraging and supported the re-introduction of habitat to the waterways but also noted these numbers will change over time, which was why surveying fish numbers on an ongoing basis was important.

“We do need to remember that these are early surveys after habitat improvement, and some of them may be influenced by seasonal conditions, but these early findings are very promising and we will continue to monitor numbers and work to continue to improve the waterways for the benefit of the native fish,” he said.

“The habitat we have installed has been sourced from fire-damaged areas of Victoria where fallen timber and tree root balls were repurposed for fish habitat. Limbs were used to build fish hotels with the support of recreational fishing group volunteers at working bees,” Mr Ryan said.

In addition to in-stream habitat, revegetation works along the banks of the river has been undertaken.

This planting will stabilise the banks, provide shade over the waterway, and in the future, allow trees to add naturally to the instream habitat through fallen limbs.

This project has been made possible with funding through the Australian and Victorian governments. The Victorian Government contribution to this project is through its \$248 million investment over four years (2020-2024) to improve catchment and waterway health across regional Victoria.

ENDS



CAPTIONS:

Above left: Members of the recreational fishing groups who built dozens of fish hotels in a community workshop earlier this year.

Above right: Fish hotels built by recreational fishing groups which were installed as part of the project.

Below left: Fire damaged root balls, rocks, and fish hotels were all installed as part of the project which had over 500 individual pieces of habitat placed in the river.

Below right: Pre and post habitat survey results.



Fish species	Pre habitat survey	Post habitat survey
Anchovy	0	2
Black Bream	115	1065
Bridled Goby	24	22
Eastern Australian Salmon	10	2
Estuary Perch	12	42
Flatheaded Gudgeon	0	402
Gobies	0	17
Smooth Toadfish	0	1
Southern Shortfin Eel	10	26
Tamar Goby	372	709
Tupong	9	2
Yellow-eye Mullet	12	1769
Sea Mullet	15	0
TOTAL	579	4059