



# KING PARROT CREEK BOASTS A HEALTHY MACQUARIE PERCH POPULATION

The Macquarie perch population in the King Parrot Creek is on the rise thanks to a recovery and monitoring program being led by the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (CMA).

Macquarie perch is a nationally endangered native fish species and the Goulburn Broken CMA is working closely with research scientists and the local community to better understand its behaviour and to improve its habitat.

King Parrot Creek begins its life in the southern slopes of the Goulburn catchment, travelling north through the Flowerdale Valley, Strath Creek and finally ending its journey in the mighty Goulburn River near Kerrisdale, downstream of Lake Eildon. Back in the 1800s, explorers Hume and Hovell were forced to stop their exploration at a place they named Mount Disappointment

because of the tough terrain. When finding their way out of this area, they discovered the beautiful King Parrot Creek, which was named because of abundant native king parrot birds.

Arthur Rylah Institute Scientist Joanne Kearns leads a team of research scientists who have been conducting annual Macquarie perch monitoring in the King Parrot Creek since 2006. The monitoring occurs in the reach downstream of Flowerdale to the junction with the Goulburn River.

Ms Kearns says, "During the drought, Macquarie perch were restricted to a few deep pools and was not doing so well. Adding to the problem was the 2009 bushfires which threatened its survival when ash and sediment washed into the creek deoxygenating the water.

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*"Our 2014 survey identified a range of native and introduced fish inhabit King Parrot Creek. Of the native fish we found two species of Galaxias, two species of Blackfish, along with Golden perch, Southern Pygmy perch, and the Flat-headed gudgeon. The introduced species included Redfin, Brown trout and Rainbow trout. But quite clearly the Macquarie perch remains the most abundant fish species in the creek."*

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▲ Picture credits: Joanne Kearns and Fern Hames

*“One of the important aspects of our recent surveys was the capture of juvenile Macquarie perch indicating they have had a particularly good breeding season. Furthermore, the monitoring program has shown the population has recovered remarkably well following the 2009 wildfires.”*

“As a bit of insurance, we temporarily removed a portion of the population during March 2009 and took them to a ‘safe house’ – a fish hatchery at Snobs Creek near Lake Eildon. We reintroduced these fish back into the creek in December 2009 when water quality had sufficiently improved.”

In 2006 31 fish were captured, followed by 16 fish two years later. In April 2014 119 fish were caught and released, the highest number captured since monitoring started. Steve Joblin lives on a small farm at Flowerdale and is President of the King Parrot Creek Environment Group.

Steve says, “The environment group has 38 members and formed only 18 months ago galvanised by the recovery effort after the 2009 fires. The group is primarily focused on improving the creek, mainly downstream of Flowerdale.

“We do a lot of tree planting. We are affiliated with the Upper Goulburn Landcare Network and from November onwards we are involved in spraying blackberry along the creek, but we make sure we stay away from the waterway so as to not impact the native fish.

“The Goulburn Broken CMA has run a couple of Fish Circus events that have involved school kids and their parents. These have proved very popular. Whilst awareness is growing, the visiting recreational fishers would be more aware than the locals of the endangered status of the Macquarie perch.

“I have lived on the creek for 18 years and in that time there has been a

dramatic improvement, primarily due to fencing the creek and keeping stock out of the water. The larger landholders were the first to come on board. The smaller the property the harder it is to get them involved ... but they get funding for off-stream watering and the creek is so much better in the long run.”

David Wakefield is a member of the Strath Creek Landcare Group and has been interested in the health of the King Parrot Creek for nearly 40 years. Like Steve, David can attest to the dramatic improvement in its health since his early days when his father farmed at Hazeldene, upstream of Flowerdale.

David says, “The removal of stock, the fencing, the willow removal, the blackberry and gorse control and the revegetation have all made a vast difference to the quality of the creek.”

The Strath Creek Landcare Group has more than 60 family memberships and has been very active since the late 1990s in contributing to improving the creek. David is particularly interested in the research effort focusing on the Macquarie perch.

David says, “Each year Sue Kosch at the Goulburn Broken CMA will send out an email that the researchers will be in the area. Myself and another Landcare group member, Laurie McMillian, go down to help out with the surveying. It is very rewarding and informative... The future of Macquarie perch in the King Parrot looks bright.”

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