



TAHBILK'S ELEGANT WINES AND WONDROUS WETLANDS

Tahbilk Estate is an historic family owned winery, established in 1860 and located in the Nagambie Lakes region of central Victoria. Purchased by the Purbrick family in 1925, Tahbilk comprises 1,214 ha of rich river flats with a frontage of 11 km to the Goulburn River and 8 km of permanent backwaters and creeks.

While Tahbilk is revered for its elegant wines it also has a rich ecosystem of wetlands and native vegetation that are home to many of Australia's rare species. Visitors to the winery can enjoy this unique natural environment by traversing the six kilometres of walking paths of the Tahbilk Eco Trails or taking a cruise through the wetlands on Tahbilk's eco-friendly electric boat.

Hayley Purbrick, Manager of the Tahbilk Wine Club and Tourism Operations says, "Conserving the natural environment has always

been significant to my family. As custodians of the Estate we have an environmental responsibility to leave a sustainable legacy for those family members to come."

With the construction of the Goulburn Weir and other irrigation infrastructure, the historical flow regime of the Goulburn River was changed, from one of high flows in winter to one of a permanently flowing summer irrigation stream. Previously the river and its associated billabongs had periodically dried back into a series of water holes. Indeed the local Aborigines knew this area as "tabilk tabilk", or the place of many waterholes, thus giving the property, Tahbilk, its name. The present Tahbilk wetlands area was created with the raising of the water level at the time that the Goulburn Weir was built in 1889.





The Tahbilk wetlands are a self-flushing series of lagoons joined to the Goulburn River at both ends and have become a safe haven for a vast array of indigenous flora and fauna. At least two threatened species are making the Tahbilk wetlands their home. The native cat fish (*Tandanus tandanus*) which is declining throughout the Murray-Darling Basin is now breeding in the wetlands and the Water Shield Lily (*Brasenia schreberi*), which is unique to Victoria, is also thriving. A confirmed recent finding of the Broad-shelled Turtle (*Chelodina expansa*) in the wetlands is also important because it is a species that hasn't previously been recorded in Nagambie.

The Nagambie Lakes is the only Australian wine region, and one of only six worldwide, where the meso-climate is dramatically influenced by an inland water mass – its climate is consistently 3°C cooler than the surrounding area.

Hayley Purbrick says, "Long before it became fashionable to plant trees, Tahbilk Estate was planting local indigenous trees and shrubs to form inter-connecting wild life corridors to allow the free passage of animals, birds and insects across the Estate. A long-term revegetation strategy for planting around the wetlands was developed back in 1991 and is still being implemented.

"We have earmarked 80 ha of land for planting in September 2014 with a mix of native species to maintain

our biodiverse values and bolster our sequestration potential. We have partnered with the Goulburn Broken CMA who is assisting us with our planting and providing important knowledge and expertise to help us get the job done properly.

"Tucked away on the property is a collection of old Yellow Box trees which are native to the area. The Estate has one of the largest populations in the district and we are looking to build on that by collecting seed and replanting this species back to its original population.

"In partnership with various government agencies, Goulburn Broken CMA and the Goulburn Broken Indigenous Seedbank, we are running a number of environmental rehabilitation programs including an ongoing pest plant and animal eradication program, an indigenous flora and fauna identifying program, and water quality monitoring. In addition, Tahbilk Estate and the GB Seedbank have established a trial site for the production of local indigenous seeds for revegetation projects throughout the Longwood Plains area. Another successful project undertaken with the assistance of the Goulburn Broken CMA was the upgrading of wetland crossings to allow for the more effective passage of fish between the wetlands and the Goulburn River."

Goulburn Broken CMA also assisted in placing 386 large snags in the lagoons to provide habitat for the

native cat fish.

Through revegetation activities, organic waste treatment and by investing in reputable carbon reduction schemes to offset current emissions, Tahbilk achieved its objective of becoming carbon neutral in the 2011-12 financial year.

"In our second year of achieving this goal we have been able to internally offset 983 tonne of CO₂ through our own re-vegetation projects leaving us with 1,525 tonne of CO₂ to cover through the purchase of external offsets.

"Some of the successful strategies we have implemented include a conscious effort to reduce the use of winery vehicles by the vineyard team and better management of older wine stocks through the Wine Club. These were two very simple ideas which had a positive impact on our results. In the process we have saved over \$20,000.

"We currently have 19,000 Wine Club members and talk to 30,000 people each year. Some 40,000 people come through our gate each year. We have a good story to tell about protecting and enhancing the values of the natural environment and we have good reach in the community. We have community volunteers help us out with the plantings and we make a conscious effort to contribute to education about the environment."



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