

Conservation of Yarra Pygmy Perch

Wild remnant populations of Yarra Pygmy Perch in the South East to be enhanced by the reintroduction of captive reared fish.

Yarra Pygmy Perch (a nationally threatened freshwater fish species) has suffered serious population declines in the South East over the last ten years as a result of the widespread loss of permanent aquatic habitat. Lauren Veale has recently joined other aquatic ecologists at Nature Glenelg Trust to work with them on a project (funded by an NRM Community Grant) aimed at improving the prospects for wild populations of Yarra Pygmy Perch through the reintroduction of captive reared individuals.



During the millennium drought (2007-2010), captive programs were established at two local high schools in Kingston and Millicent. In order to transition the program to more natural environments, students at Millicent High School (led by Kathy Bell) released fish into a nearby landowner's dam which underwent revegetation with key aquatic plants in order to provide suitable habitat for Yarra pygmy perch. This program has been an outstanding success with a survey in April 2014 recording approximately 1200 fish. This catch represents only a small proportion of the total number of fish in the dam and suggests that there is indeed a very significant population now not

only residing but actually breeding in the dam.

Aside from actually reintroducing Yarra pygmy perch back into the wild, the establishment of 'back-up' populations in dams like this really holds the key to the continued management of this species. If you are a landowner who is interested in helping with these conservation efforts, or you are interested in exploring the use of native fish to control mosquitos, Lauren would be most happy to arrange a site visit to assess whether your pond or dam could provide suitable habitat for Yarra pygmy perch. You can contact her at lauren.veale@natureglenelg.org.au or by phone on 0439 034 390.