

Wah Wah locals show wildlife worry

Local farmers have made clear their concern for the wildlife that have come to rely on the network of stock tanks in the Wah Wah district.

A Landcare field day held on the eve of our national day of celebration saw families gather at 'Galah', north of Hay, to learn more about the wildlife that use the stock tanks and discuss what might be done to soften the blow when the new pipeline goes ahead.

'Galah' owner and Hay Landcare chairman Ian Auldish said it was heartening to see about 50 people come together, united with a common interest in the welfare of local wildlife.

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Inside the shearing shed, results were presented from a local study being coordinated by wildlife ecologist Matt Herring to document the value of the tanks before they're replaced with troughs.

Jonathan Starks, who worked with the Birchip Cropping Group, then spoke about the wildlife ponds that had been constructed along the Wimmera-Mallee pipeline in Victoria to help mitigate habitat losses there.

There was much discussion about what mitigation methods would be best and the practicalities of implementing them. Large constructed wetlands and the strategic retention of particularly significant tanks, as well as the creation of wildlife ponds, were discussed among neighbours and with representatives from Murrumbidgee Irrigation and the Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority.

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Down the back of the property at a tank surrounded by Black Box, the crowd heard from micro-bat expert Craig Grabham and got to meet five different species of these curious critters. These tiny insect-eating bats typically rely on old hollow-bearing trees to roost in during the day. They had been caught in a harp trap the night before as part of the surveys, and were a big hit with kids and adults alike.

"Watching the release of dozens of long-eared, free-tail, broad-nosed and wattled bats really highlighted to everyone the value of the tanks for wildlife," said Mr Herring.

"There are many things that can be done to benefit wildlife in the Wah Wah area, and it is just so reassuring to see such interest in the critters that we share the landscape with."

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