

## Wah Wah wildlife withering away?

Progress always comes at a cost. Improved water use efficiency is critical in the Riverina but what about the wildlife that has come to rely on the systems of old?

With the Wah Wah stock and domestic pipeline now set to go ahead, there is concern among locals about the loss of wildlife habitat.

A wildlife family field day will be held on Wednesday January 25th to reveal the secretive wetland critters that use stock tanks and to discuss ways of mitigating the loss of habitat.

Initiated by Hay Landcare and the Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority, a study of the wildlife that use the tanks north of Hay began in September last year. It is documenting the value of the tanks before they're decommissioned.

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Wildlife ecologist Matt Herring who is coordinating the study said "even though most tanks don't support key wetland habitats like waterplants and mudflats, there are hundreds of them and together their value is significant."

Preliminary results from the study show tanks typically only support common species, although the tanks that do contain good habitat have supported some rarer species like the Glossy Ibis and Red-kneed Dotterel. In total more than 80 bird species, together with various reptiles, mammals and frogs, have been recorded using the tanks or habitats immediately adjacent. They will all be affected to varying degrees when the pipeline and troughs replace the channels and tanks.

Mr Herring said he is really keen to hear of the ideas people might have about how new wetland habitats might be created.

Jonathan Starks will talk about the wildlife ponds that have been constructed along the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline, and Craig Grabham ('Bat Man') will highlight the value of bats and their habitats

