

Why Wetlands? Raising community value of natural wetlands on the Hay Plain

Project location: Black Swamp, south of Hay NSW

Project description: Why wetlands? It's an often-asked question across the lower Murrumbidgee in recent years. In a climate where water is precious and irrigation is vital for food production, why should we care about natural wetlands? Especially small ones? They don't yield products to keep us fed, clothed or economically viable, they'd dry up naturally in low-rainfall years without human interference, so why should we care about sustaining them? Hay Landcare, Murrumbidgee Landcare Inc and the Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority have joined forces to raise community awareness of the value of natural wetlands around Hay. Be they large or small, on public or private land, purely rain-fed or sustained by environmental flows, our wetlands ARE of great importance, locally, nationally and even internationally.

Plant, bird, reptile, frog, mammal and invertebrate species all rely on our wetlands, even when they're dry. For some species these wetlands serve a vital role in preventing global decline. Other wetland-reliant species serve a practical role in local and regional production systems, including pollination of crops and pasture, pest-control, and even weed control.

'Why Wetlands?' will deliver two field days, one for local school students and one for the general public, at a local wetland near Hay in early spring 2013. Both field days will be presented by well-known wetlands ecologist Pat Murray and aim to increase local understanding and appreciation of the important role our wetland areas serve.