

28 February 2019



Major appeal launched for River Murray

Nature Foundation SA has launched a major \$200,000 public appeal to enable us to continue our work helping to restore and maintain the health of the River Murray and its surrounds through environmental watering.

President of Nature Foundation SA Jan Ferguson OAM said the appeal is a response to the unprecedented threats to the river from drought, population growth, climate change and river regulation.

“These factors have combined in a way we’ve never seen before to threaten the habitats – and the very existence – of many bird, animal and plant species,” Ms Ferguson said.

“This ‘Water For Nature’ appeal is a concerted effort to arrest the deterioration of dozens of wetland and floodplain habitats. It builds on many years of success we have achieved through our environmental watering and conservation programs, which have seen great progress in restoring habitats for vulnerable species.

“For example, the Southern Bell Frog has been recorded for the first time since 2010 at a Water For Nature site near Paringa. Another threatened species, the Freckled Duck, has returned to its former habitats near Nildottie and Renmark following environmental watering at those sites.

“Our Water For Nature program has also used Commonwealth water for the environment to help save native River Red Gum and Black Box woodlands and is restoring wetlands near Milang that host Latham’s Snipes. These birds fly tens of thousands of kilometres from Korea to access the freshwater wetlands and surrounding vegetation.

“Water for Nature’s core purpose is to bring people together to deliver water to protect and restore wetlands, floodplains and vulnerable species. Through an agreement with the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder, and partnerships with irrigators, landholders and community groups we have already delivered more than 12,000 megalitres to 80 different locations.

“The program has also developed practical resources such as the ‘My Healthy River Toolkit’ to explain what environmental watering is and how interested wetland owners, community people, and organisations can access it to improve the health of the river. Our new \$200,000 appeal will allow us to keep working in a very practical way with river communities to restore wetlands and floodplains along this great river.

“One objective of the fundraising is to help save small freshwater fishes, which are often overlooked but face an uncertain future without intervention. Of most concern is the Yarra Pygmy Perch, unrecorded in the whole Murray-Darling Basin since 2015, which may become the first freshwater fish to become extinct from the region without intervention.

“The River Murray is one of South Australia’s greatest assets – a natural phenomenon of great beauty; a lifeline for the people, animals and plant species who depend on it for their existence; and an inspiration for many South Australians who understand and deeply appreciate the importance of the river.

“With public support for Nature Foundation SA’s appeal we can do so much more to help the River Murray for the benefit of nature, community wellbeing and our local economies.

“We all depend on the River Murray in some way and this appeal offers a practical approach to help save it.”

Find out more about the Water For Nature appeal at:

<https://naturefoundation.org.au/support-us/our-appeals>

About Nature Foundation SA:

Over the past 38 years Nature Foundation SA has invested in conserving, restoring and protecting South Australian landscapes to ensure nature survives and thrives in our magnificent state. We do this by:

- restoring unique habitats and revitalising damaged ecosystems
- saving threatened species
- revitalising wetlands and floodplains along the River Murray with environmental watering
- working with local communities
- funding conservation research projects
- encouraging environmental education and citizen science
- nature-based tourism and geotourism on our Nature Reserves

Fast facts:

- Nature Foundation SA has helped protect over 1.1 million hectares of South Australia and is currently working on protecting the next 1.1 million!
- Over 400 post-graduate student grants awarded by Nature Foundation SA continue to yield amazing work and attract wonderful, bright minds to nature science.
- Our Water For Nature Program has delivered more than 12,000 megalitres of environmental water to help revitalise nearly 90 River Murray wetland and floodplain sites.
- Nature Foundation SA manages six Nature Reserves with significant conservation value. This land protects threatened species, builds wildlife corridors and provides a base from which scientific studies can be undertaken.

Media contact:

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website: <https://naturefoundation.org.au/>

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