

# Lower Murray River

## Quarterly newsletter

### Issue 19: January to March 2024

Welcome to Issue 19 of the Lower Murray newsletter, where we provide updates on our work monitoring ecological responses to Commonwealth environmental water delivery in the Lower Murray.

### Project updates

- The majority of monitoring was completed for the 2023-24 season. The fyke net sampling trip, the Murray cod recruitment electrofishing sampling and the littoral vegetation survey are now planned to occur in May and June 2024.
- 💧 All stream metabolism and dissolved oxygen loggers have been removed from the water, with data crunching and analysis now underway.
- Zooplankton and larval fish samples were sent to the lab for sorting and identification. So far, around 30% of the fish samples were sorted with perch and Murray cod spotted. Our researchers are excited about starting identification and confirming the presence and abundance of the large-bodied native fish larvae in our samples.
- During the Murray cod sampling trip in February, young-of-the-year (YOY), one-year old and other age classes of Murray cod were captured. However further sampling will be conducted during next quarter to confirm relative strength of these year classes.
- Lower Murray team members have actively participated in the different Flow-MER 2.0 strategy discussions and provided comments for the draft strategies. Our researchers have drafted the Monitoring, Evaluation and Research (MER) plans, and once submitted, will be looking forward to receiving feedback from the Area Working Group (AWG) and Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (CEWH).

In this issue:

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Australian Government  
Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder



Government of South Australia  
Department of Primary Industries and Regions



## Catch fish without a hook: Electrofishing demonstration!

In early February, the SARDI Inland Waters Team held an electrofishing demonstration day for the local community at Loxton to showcase how electrofishing works, why it is used by our scientists and to discuss the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder's Flow-MER Program work being done along the Lower Murray.

The community event was a great success with over 80 attendees, with families, local community groups and plenty of recreational fishing enthusiasts joining in to find out more.

The day started off with an Acknowledgement of Country and introduction to CEWH commitments and programs by Richard Minter from the CEWH, followed by Qifeng Ye, Inland Waters & Catchment Ecology Program Leader, SARDI. The Flow-MER Program was discussed along with how electrofishing is used to study changes in fish communities through time, with this data used to inform the management of water and ecological restoration.

Two pontoon boats took members of the public on short trips along the Murray River to watch Arron Strawbridge and George Giatas from the SARDI research team conduct electrofishing.

The electrofishing technique involves generating a field of electricity in the water within about 5 metres. This temporarily stuns the fish in close proximity so researchers can easily collect fish with a dip net, measure, sample and tag fish if needed, and then return fish to the water once they recover in a live well and are ready to be released.

On the day, the research team caught Carp, Bony Herring, Australian Smelt and Golden Perch and managed to snag two Murray Cod at the end of the day which was great for the public to see. The event was well received by the community attendees with lots of positive feedback.

Holding community engagement events like these are important to demonstrate how our research is conducted, to connect with people and build the interest and support from local communities.

Congratulations to Luciana Bucater, Qifeng Ye, Arron Strawbridge and George Giatas on a great event. A big thank you to Louise Gleeson from PIRSA Communications and Toni Crosbie who attended with a group of Fishcare volunteers who were a huge help.

Find out more about the [Lower Murray Flow-MER program](#).



Pictured: The electrofishing vessel



Pictured: Over 80 community members attended to find out about electrofishing



Pictured: Qifeng Ye talking about the Flow-MER Program



Pictured: The Lower Murray Flow-MER team  
Arron Strawbridge,  
Qifeng Ye, Luciana Bucater &  
George Giatas

# Engagement and communications updates

- During this quarter, the Lower Murray team spent some good time engaging and consulting with the Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation (NAC) and River Murray and Mallee Aboriginal Corporation (RMMAC) on how both groups could work together with SARDI research team to monitor 'Pondi' (Murray cod) using electrofishing. Protocols for working across cultural borders are being developed so members from NAC could undertake monitoring upstream from their 'patch' in the RMMAC area.
- The Lower Murray team has been busy working on two short videos which will feature the lessons learned during the five years of Flow-MER 1.0, as well as how water for the environment influences salt export and import, and fishes of the Lower Murray.
- Lastly, our team have been partaking in discussions and online workshops with Flow-MER2.0 Knowledge Exchange Working Group, which have informed the development of the knowledge exchange, engagement and communication activities for the next five years in the Lower Murray and Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth Area.

## What's next

- The technical report and summary report for 2022-23 season will be finalised during the next quarter. Field sampling and laboratory sample processing (larval sample sorting and identification) will continue and are anticipated to be completed by June or July 2024.
- First Aboriginal Rangers workshop and another Indigenous Ecology in Action workshop will be held in Calperum Station in May 2024.
- Two more short videos are being produced to summarise our science and First Nations engagement work as part of the MER Program, and showcase lessons learned and the results achieved during MER 1.0.

For more information about the work we do, visit the: [Flow-MER website](#)  
Follow us on: [Facebook](#) or [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#)



Pictured: Murray cod, otherwise known as 'Pondi' – young-of-the-year



Pictured: Retrieving water quality logger

