

## Merbein Community Update

The Merbein Community Update is just one way for Mallee Catchment Management Authority (CMA) to keep the community up to date with the latest work underway across Merbein Common.

From events to environmental watering, exciting new projects and updates, you'll find it all right here in the Merbein Community Update.

It's published seasonally and helps keeps us connected – we share your passion for the wonderful Merbein Common, and we hope you enjoy this update.



ABOVE: Brickworks Billabong is flourishing post environmental water delivery.

### Brickworks Billabong

Following a top up of environmental water in December 2025, Brickworks Billabong is well and truly thriving!

The billabong looks lush and is full of native flora and fauna, including a variety of waterbirds that have flocked to the wetland recently.

An abundance of Black winged stilts, Black fronted dotterels, Hardhead and Pink eared ducks and hundreds of Black swans have made themselves quite at

home at Brickworks now, along with an abundance of the aquatic plant ruppia - providing a great, comfy nesting habitat for swans and cover for small-bodied fish.

In December 2025, the existing population of critically endangered Murray hardyhead in Brickworks received a boost with over 100 fish translocated

into the billabong. To further support Murray hardyhead at Brickworks, fish screens were trialled during pumping to help exclude invasive species.

Fish surveys undertaken recently found no evidence of carp in the wetland - a win for Brickworks and a win for our native flora and fauna that call it home!

## Catfish Billabong

In Spring 2025, Catfish Billabong received a delivery of environmental water via temporary pumps, to help support the growth of surrounding aquatic plants and floodplain trees.

This water will be held in the wetland for 3 to 4 months to maximise its benefits, before some is gradually released back into the Murray River by incrementally opening the regulator gates that form part of the Catfish regulator and retaining wall structure. Over a period of several weeks, as the regulator gates are operated, the water in Catfish Billabong will slowly recede back to weir pool level.

Since the delivery, there have been a number of positive environmental responses, including a burst of the surrounding native tangled lignum (*Duma florulenta*) and also increased numbers of waterbirds.



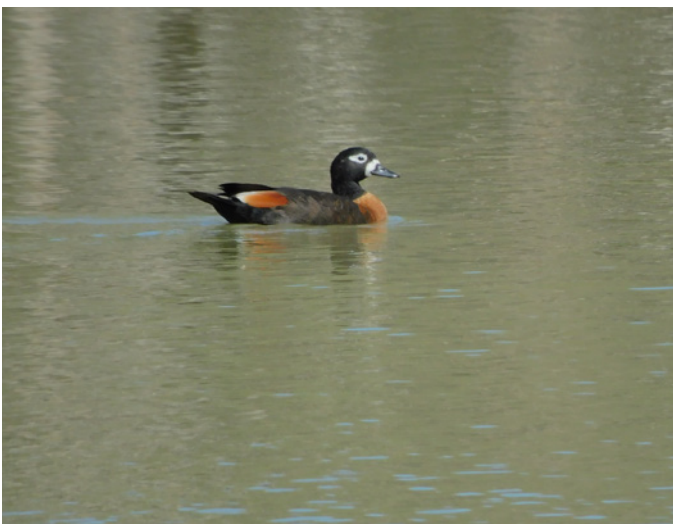
ABOVE: Lignum shrubland inundated during environmental water delivery to Catfish Billabong.



ABOVE: Black swan building a nest on Catfish Billabong post environmental water delivery.



ABOVE: Environmental water up against the retaining wall at Catfish Billabong.



ABOVE: A female Australian shelduck spotted at Catfish Billabong.



ABOVE: A group of Grey teal enjoying the environmental water delivery.

## On-ground works continue at Merbein Common

Mallee CMA is currently working with First People of the Millewa-Mallee Aboriginal Corporation (FPMMAC) to establish fencing along Red Gum track to protect native vegetation.

Managing unauthorized vehicle access via unofficial tracks will help reduce impacts on sensitive areas and encourage regeneration of native species.

Revegetation of the unauthorised tracks is also underway, with a mixture of native seeds spread throughout the ground surface at

the entrance, complemented by the spread of protective native mulch over the seeds.

The project will significantly enhance and build on existing works already completed in this area, supporting long-term habitat restoration and improved environmental outcomes for the site.



ABOVE: Protective fencing and regeneration works at Merbein Common are underway.

## Lake Hawthorn

Thanks to a combination of environmental water and recent rainfall, Lake Hawthorn is currently holding significantly more water than usual.

This year alone, at least 60 bird species including Red-necked avocets, Red-capped plovers and Red-necked stints have been spotted at Lake Hawthorn, as well as a whopping 16 migratory species including one very special international guest!

The Sharp-tailed sandpiper is mostly found in Siberia during the breeding period (June to August) and migrates to Australia from September to March. Lucky for us, this species has currently decided to call Lake Hawthorn home!



*ABOVE: Red capped plover.*



*ABOVE: Sharp-tailed sandpipers.*



*ABOVE: Red-necked avocets.*

## World Wetlands Day 2026

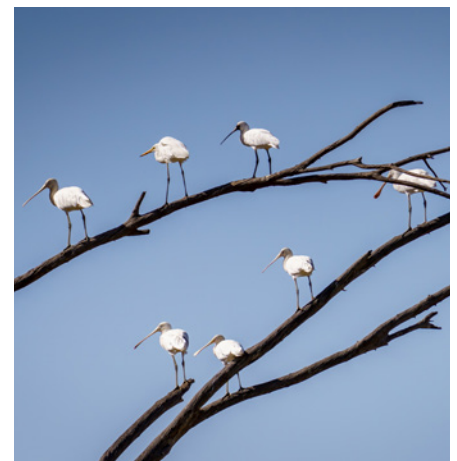
Mallee CMA teamed up with Friends of Merbein Common and Mildura Birdlife to celebrate World Wetlands Day with a beautiful morning spent at the picturesque Catfish Billabong.

Participants met on Lignum Track for a delicious breakfast, followed by a bird survey around the billabong. Over 30 different species were spotted, including Spotted crakes, Red knee dotterels, Southern whiteface and Royal spoonbills!

It was a lovely morning filled with local knowledge sharing and appreciation for the species that call Catfish Billabong home.



ABOVE: World Wetlands Day celebrations at Catfish Billabong.



ABOVE: Little black cormorants, White ibis, Royal and Yellow billed spoonbills, and a Great egret were among the various species spotted during World Wetlands Day celebrations.

## The 2026 Mallee CMA Birds of the Mallee calendar now available!

Full of stunning images captured by members of Mildura Birdlife, the 2026 Mallee CMA Birds of the Mallee calendar is now available to the public.

Special mention goes to the winner of the coveted front-page spot, Finn Cupper! Finn's image of Australian Kestrels at Castle Crossing Reserve is magnificent, but don't just take our word for it – pop in to the Mallee CMA office to get your copy before they disappear!





### Mallee Farmer

#### The latest edition of Mallee Farmer is now available!

It's a great insight into the latest dryland farming research, training, trends and programs in the Mallee. Visit [malleecma.com.au/publications](http://malleecma.com.au/publications) to have a read and don't forget to sign up to the next edition to get it delivered straight to your inbox!

## Mallee Waterway Strategy renewal 2026

Work is currently underway to update the Mallee Waterway Strategy (MWS), which is the planning document for how the region's rivers, creeks, lakes, wetlands and adjoining floodplains will be managed over the next 10 years.

The renewed MWS will build on the region's achievements and have an increased emphasis on:

- respecting and acknowledging Aboriginal culture and recognising Aboriginal peoples' rights, obligations and role in caring for Country;
- incorporating Traditional Owner self-determined content, including outcomes, priorities and management directions;
- inclusion of social, recreational and economic values in planning;
- considering the impacts of climate change and climate adaptation.

If you are involved in a community group that would like to have input into the MWS renewal, please email [info@malleecma.com.au](mailto:info@malleecma.com.au)

To provide your feedback on wetland and waterway values, keep an eye on Mallee CMA's social media to find out when we will be at community markets and/or holding drop-in sessions. You can also take part in the online survey, which is available at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/67WMC2Q>

## How can I find out more?

For more information on partnering with Traditional Owners and community members to enhance Merbein Common, contact:

**Nicole Wishart** - Executive Manager Waterways, Wetlands and Statutory Functions **0427 514 303**

*We acknowledge the Traditional Owners, Aboriginal communities and organisations of the Victorian Mallee. We recognize the diversity of their cultures and the deep connections they have with their lands and waters. We value partnerships with them for the health of People and Country. We also pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging; and recognize the primacy of Traditional Owners' obligations, rights and responsibilities to use and care for their traditional lands and water.*

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