



OzFish Project Summary Report

Merri River Estuary Habitat Works

Summary

In stream woody habitat plays a vital role in the health of Victoria's aquatic ecosystems, particularly our native fish. The Merri river estuary, a popular fishing destination in the heart of Warrnambool, with a land cutting in the late 1800's establishing the eastern mouth of the Merri Estuary, this stretch of the waterway has provided a unique opportunity for fish habitat restoration. With no instream habitat, the estuary has been a focus of recent restoration efforts to create an ecologically healthy river and benefit local fish populations.

The Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority conducted a number on ground works in stretches of the river through 2015/16, including fish hotels and rock piles for instream structural habitat, and riparian works such as weed control.



Root balls and rock piles being installed in the Merri River Estuary. Credit: S.Ryan

To build on and continue the fantastic work already achieved, in 2017, OzFish volunteers undertook restoration in a stretch of the river, as part of the broader Merri River Restoration Project. OzFishers were proud to do their part, where after earlier weed clearing works, OzFish volunteers planted over 500 native plants in a stretch of the Merri's riparian zone to support the long-term recovery and regeneration of the waterway. In addition, seven redgum root balls were installed in the river, along with fabricated "Fish hotels" complementing the riparian improvements to the riverbank.

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OzFish volunteers during a riparian planting day at the Merri River Estuary. Credit: Ozfish

These works were possible through OzFish corporate philanthropy partnership with BCF stores, enabling local fishers to demonstrate their roles as environmental stewards of their local waterways.

Fish Surveys along sections of the of estuary before and after habitat works restored in the broader restoration program demonstrated increased numbers of fish utilising habitat structures and indicated the value of in stream habitat rehabilitation to improve local fish populations.



OzFish SouthWest Chapter President and Steve Starling with root balls ready for habitat installation Credit: OzFish

OzFish is proud to support and partner with many of Victoria's ten Catchment Management Authority's to provide rec fisher and community driven restoration efforts across the state.

For more information, check out www.ozfish.org.au

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