



# FOR LIFE

*keeping water flowing*

## LIFEstory

### Birds and wildlife benefit from 'piping right'

*By Melissa Pouliot for GWMWater*

**Rural areas such as Birchip in Western Victoria's Wimmera-Mallee offer big skies, no crowds, no noise, peaceful sunrises and sunsets and a place to catch your breath.**

The Birchip farm of Keith and Helen Barber is an exception. When they step out their back door, the noise and the activity of birds and wildlife is as hectic as inner-city Melbourne during peak hour on a Friday night.

And it's all thanks to a wetland which receives a Wimmera Mallee Pipeline annual environmental allocation.

"If you go out on a clear night the frogs are deafening and on top of that you've got birds like the Nankeen Night Heron that feed on dusk and do a lot of squawking while they're at it," Keith says.

"During the day the noise is also incredible with so many birds such as coots and ducks. Then we have swallows and bats going crazy as they swoop to catch bugs and insects on the surface. There's goannas coming in to drink and feed, mud larks nesting in low branches over the water and a whole lot of other animals such as carpet pythons living nearby. The other day we also had some swans resting on our wetland for a couple of days.

"The activity around the wetland is just extraordinary."

Keith is the founding member of Pipe Right – a group formed during the planning of the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline Project. Their goal was to ensure the final project included an environmental allocation for wetlands away from rivers.

Keith says he felt an enormous sense of satisfaction in August 2013 when Victorian Coalition Government Water Minister Peter Walsh visited his wetland to see for himself the results of 'piping right'.

Mr Walsh was there with GWMWater, Wimmera, Mallee and North Central catchment management authorities, local government and people from the community to celebrate the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline's wetlands connection project.

Around 60 people gathered at Roselyn Wetlands on the nearby farm of Max and Dorothy Reid before visiting the Barber's farm.

*"We feel very proud of what we've achieved for wetlands," Keith says. "There were a lot of people in 'Pipe Right' who went to a huge amount of effort to preserve wildlife in the area under a piped water supply system, and it was great to celebrate this achievement with so many people."*

The wetlands project is connecting 51 sites across the Wimmera-Mallee via water savings from the pipeline. The project's 1000-megalitre entitlement will supply sites of environmental significance with the aim of creating a network of open water across three catchment management authority regions – Wimmera, Mallee and North Central.

The Barber's wetland gained special notoriety in 2012 when Keith and Helen spotted about eight of the rarely-seen threatened bird, Australian painted snipe.

*“I’m amazed at the birds that have come back and at the breeding that’s going on at our wetland,” Keith says. “I think that our efforts have gone a long way to getting people to understand the environmental impact of having this water. It’s the water that brings all this wildlife together and it’s just so exciting to see.”*



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