

## Ancient aquaculture site is now a heritage treasure

Dating back thousands of years, the Budj Bim landscape at Lake Condah in Victoria's south-west shows evidence of a large, settled Aboriginal community systematically farming eels for food and trade in what is considered to be one of Australia's earliest and largest aquaculture ventures. In late July, it became one of the first three places to be listed on the new National Heritage List.

Announcing the site's listing as a cultural treasure of international significance Senator Ian Campbell said it was a unique example of Indigenous life centred on sophisticated cultural use of the environment.

'At Budj Bim thousands of years ago the Gunditjmarra people built a highly sophisticated system of weirs, channels, water races and fish traps so they could grow and harvest fish, particularly eels', Senator Campbell said.

The complex enterprise, which remains visible today, covers an area of more than 100 square kilometres.



**The Budj Bim landscape at Lake Condah.**  
Robin Sharrock and the Australian Heritage Photo Library

More than 30 000 years ago the ground in this area rumbled and rolled as the Gunditjmarra people nearby witnessed Budj Bim, an important creation being from the Dreamtime, reveal himself in the landscape. It was the Tyrendarra lava flow, extending from the source, Mount Eccles, and flowing over 50 km to the west and south.

As the lava flowed to the sea it changed the drainage pattern in this part of western Victoria, creating large wetlands. Thousands of years ago, the Gunditjmarra



**Remains of a traditional Lake Condah hut.**  
Robin Sharrock and the Australian Heritage Photo Library

began developing digging channels to bring water and young eels from Darlots Creek to low lying areas.

Budj Bim was nominated by the Gunditjmarra for National Heritage Listing to share the remarkable story of the place with all Australians.

**More information:**

About Budj Bim: <http://www.deh.gov.au/heritage/national/sites/budjbim.html>

## The nation called to poll ... the pests

After the hugely successful first stage of WildWatch earlier this year had people all around Australia reporting on the beasts just outside their window, the ABC is harnessing the combined power of the people and technology again – this time to paint a highly detailed map of the pests and problem wildlife of Australia by postcode – in a single sweep.

Between 18 September and 22 October, and using TV, Radio and the Internet to encourage and record Australians' observations, WildWatch2 is the biggest interactive wildlife survey run in Australia.

Dione Gilmore, head of ABC's Natural History Unit, said 'The idea is to find out what our pests are and how far they have spread so we can generate up-to-the-minute maps of their distribution across the whole continent.'

She said WildWatch is an innovative project not just for the ABC, but for Australia and the world. 'It creates a feedback loop with the audience, but also integrates the land managers and researchers ... we are actively involving viewers, inspiring their interest and awareness in the wildlife around them, compiling results

based on what they are telling us, and putting it all together to make the bigger picture available to everyone.'

More than 27 000 online surveys were received during the first WildWatch project, with 3800 people writing detailed reports about the wildlife in their gardens – giving data that, according to Darryl Jones, Senior Lecturer in ecology at Griffith University, 'has given us an extraordinary level of insight and lent substance to the hunches that some of us had about wildlife distribution.'

People in all postcode areas, from apartment dwellers to those on outback farms, are invited to fill in the WildWatch2 online survey to record feral animals and plants, as well as over-abundant native animals. From this, input can be gathered from across Australia in a way never attempted before. Darryl Jones said there is a real need to find out which animals are perceived as problems, why they are a problem and how serious the problem is. 'This is invaluable to help direct research and extension effort.'

Many organisations have a vested interest in the project. Griffith University,



**For all their charm, the cockatoo's numbers and destructive habits have become a problem in parts of Australia.** David Parer/ABC

the Australian Centre for Urban Ecology, Deakin University, the Australasian Wildlife Management Society and the Australian Museum, to name a few, will provide support and use the data to better understand current wildlife and biodiversity trends.

**More information:**

WildWatch: [www.abc.net.au/wildwatch/](http://www.abc.net.au/wildwatch/)