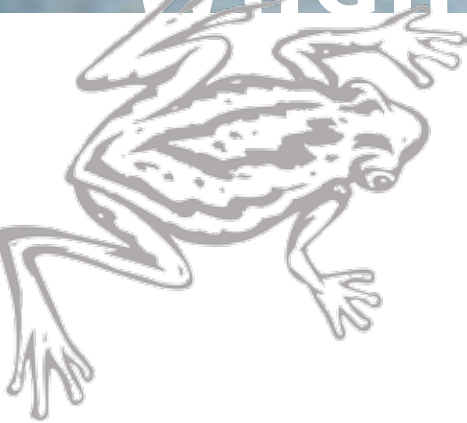




Wildlife in our Wetlands



Every living thing needs water to survive. All the plants and animals within a wetland form a food web that starts with single-celled organisms and plants that take up nutrients. Invertebrates eat these plants and microscopic organisms and, in turn, frogs, fish and small reptiles eat them.



Top Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*) have long angular legs perfectly adapted for feeding in the shallows.
Photo: Luke Simon

Above Many native fish species, such as Congolli (*Pseudaphritis urvilli*) are reliant upon healthy wetland habitats.
Photo: Luke Simon

All this eating (or 'processing') removes nutrients and debris from the system, leaving behind clean water.

Wetlands are recharged by rainfall run-off (stormwater). In a natural system, when there is a period of drought, wetlands may dry out. Many of the native species of vertebrate fauna that use wetlands are adapted to these conditions.

Birds such as Wood Sandpiper and Blacktailed Godwit are migratory, and will only frequent a wetland on their way to somewhere else.

Others, such as Australian Shoveler and Nankeen Kestrel, have bred in the City's wetlands.

Not all vertebrates in the wetlands are native. Introduced birds are common and may place pressure on native bird species as they compete for resources such as food, or roosting and nesting places.

They may introduce diseases that native birds have no immunity to and they can even inter-breed with indigenous species and so lessen the chances of their survival.



Exotic fish place pressure on native fish in the same manner and may present additional problems. European Carp stir up the bed of wetland ponds and generate turbid (muddy) conditions. This can cause algal blooms and result in plant dieback, which may severely damage the health of a wetland. Turbid water can also clog up the gills of native fish.

Where Carp have become established, wetlands can be dried out to reduce their numbers. The CSIRO is currently undertaking work to introduce a 'daughterless' gene into Carp populations. This has the potential to greatly reduce populations of this invasive species over several generations.

The two frogs most commonly seen and heard in Council's constructed wetlands are the Common Froglet and the Brown Tree Frog. Others that can be seen and heard are the Bullfrog or Eastern Banjo Frog and the Spotted Grass Frog.

Learn more

For more information on related topics, see the other fact sheets in the Wetlands series. You may also like to visit the following websites for more information:

Australian frogs
www.frogsaustralia.net.au
www.frogs.org.au

Australian fish
www.amonline.net.au/fishes

Australian birds
www.birdsaustralia.com.au
www.abc.net.au/science/birds
www.wetlandsandwaders.com

Links to Australian mammals
www.amonline.net.au/mammals

Samples of Australian bird songs
www.abc.net.au/archives



Top The superbly adapted bill of the Royal Spoonbill makes this bird well suited to foraging for small fish, shellfish and frogs.
Photo: City of Salisbury

Above Grasshoppers and locusts are among the hundreds of insect and arachnid species that thrive in Salisbury's wetlands.
Photo: Luke Simon

Contact the Watershed
Salisbury Highway, Mawson Lakes SA 5095
Telephone 08 8258 0862 Email watershed@salisbury.sa.gov.au

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