



## Central Highlands



**Native frogs have started inhabiting and breeding in the artificial wetland.**



**Visitors admire the new wetland and interpretive signs.**



# On-ground works

## The Gong Gong Wetland Success Story

*Above left* The wetland site prior to construction.

*Above right* Interpretive signs have been assembled around the wetland to inform visitors of its value.

**'It's important for people to understand wetlands because they are an often neglected aspect of the landscape,' says Waterwatch Coordinator Andrew Harris. 'The Interpretive trail highlights the value of wetlands, and that these systems aren't wastelands'.**

**T**hanks to a Waterwatch initiative, the Central Highlands community has come together to create and reap the biodiversity and water quality benefits of an artificial wetland.

The Gong Gong Reservoir and Yarrowee River parkland is a Waterwatch project site that has been frequently visited by school and other group tours over the last 8 years. The parkland includes some of the last remaining pre-gold rush vegetation in the area, and has been the site of significant rehabilitation works with native plant species, and woody weed removal.

When local Waterwatch Coordinator Andrew Harris was inspired to turn a neglected grassy paddock between the bush reserve and river into an artificial wetland, he submitted a project proposal to the Corangamite CMA.

Key locals became involved in the vision, including Gavin Cerini, a local wetland restoration consultant, and Kurtis Noyce, from the Ballarat Environmental Network (BEN). Together, they sat down and began to plan how the project could become a reality.

Once given the green light, a contractor was brought in to excavate the wetland. The Ballarat Environmental Network played a key role in the selection of native plant species, the overseeing of the project and the running of volunteer planting days that attracted environmental students from the University of Ballarat, members of BEN, and interested community groups and individuals.

The rainwater-fed Gong Gong wetland has been in operation for the past 10 months, and already the environmental benefits are evident. Native species that have already adopted the wetland include native frogs, swamp wallabies, pollution-sensitive macro-invertebrates and many unusual birds. During high flow, the wetland is functioning as a sediment and nutrient filter for water moving downstream from the Gong Gong Reservoir through Ballarat.

To help with interpretation of wetland biodiversity and function, Andrew has developed an Interpretation Trail with a number of informative signs to enhance visitor appreciation of the wetlands. The trail will be a well-visited attraction, with over 40,000 visitors to the parkland, and 3,000 students visiting the site annually.