



## Glenelg Hopkins

Can a life-size platypus, kookaburra and owl captivate students and raise awareness of catchment management, water quality and biodiversity issues? One Waterwatch Coordinator in the Glenelg Hopkins region is showing that you can with his 'Wetland Creatures come to Life' display.

Like diversity in Victorian communities, diversity in wetlands adds value and vitality to the local environment. Portland Waterwatch coordinator David Nichols' collection of still-life mammals and birds from Victoria's south west is proving a popular way of engaging more students in wetland and river health education. Students are allowed to get up close and personal with the collection, whilst learning about local food webs, ecology and threats to local wetlands including draining, grazing, vegetation clearing and pest plant and animal invasion.

David says, 'Kids love to hold and touch specimens of animals they would otherwise only hear or read about. Through close examination and discussion, they are able to discover the connectiveness between the animal and its environment, and also that animal and others of its environment.'

So far over 2500 school students have viewed the display and participated in education sessions at events including World Environment Day, National Tree Day and National Water Week. Participants took away an understanding and appreciation of wetland productivity and diversity, and why they should be valued and protected from threats.

**Young children love getting up close to the birds and other specimens that form part of the 'Wildlife Creatures Come to Life' display.**



Photos courtesy of the Glenelg Hopkins Waterwatch program.

David and his creatures captivate school students during a local environmental festival.



'My favourite by far was the falcon, he was so cute...(and) I managed to learn something too, if there's water and small bugs, there's big bugs and small birds and falcons!' said Sarah, Year 3-4, Port Fairy Consolidated School.

Enthusiasm at an early age is important to ensure that the next generation has a strong interest in, and cares for, their local environment.

# Wetland creatures come to Life

