



Mallee

Penguins in the Mallee



Guests take time out from dinner to complete a Waterwatch word find.

'We really did get an education in water bugs. During her presentation, the bugs were as big as melons!' Wilma Schmidt, Mildura Penguin Club.



Photos courtesy of Mallee Waterwatch program.



Penguin Club members take a closer look at aquatic macroinvertebrates.



Can you pick which bottle of tap water came from Tasmania, Melbourne, Mildura and Swan Hill?

When Fleur Johnson took on the Waterwatch Officer role in the Mallee this year, she certainly didn't expect to meet any Penguins!

The Mildura Penguin Club is a public speaking group assisting women to develop public speaking and communication skills. The club aims to develop women's personal skills so that they can 'communicate with confidence', and attracts members from diverse backgrounds. When Club member Wilma Schmidt heard about Waterwatch after receiving a copy of the Mallee Waterwatch newsletter, she promptly invited Fleur to come and speak at the Club's 33rd anniversary 'Water Theme' dinner.

'Fleur was a gift. Such a vibrant enthusiastic young lady, not daunted at all by speaking to a communication club. So natural, and so passionate about her work and involving people', Wilma said.

Fleur engaged Club members during the anniversary dinner with a Waterwatch word-find, a Waterwatch bug quiz, and introduced Club members to the wet world of macroinvertebrates by projecting footage onto the big screen.

'I, and many others, had no idea about their existence, but I do now. I'm sure they're vitally important for the balance in our rivers', Wilma said.

Club members were challenged to test their taste buds by sampling tap water samples from Tasmania, Melbourne, Swan Hill and Mildura, and to figure out which one was the local drop. The night also included an energetic discussion on 'Should Mildura have green nature strips?' Winners were appropriately rewarded at the end of the night with a box of water crackers!

Many of the dinner participants, including past Club members, thought the night was one of the best anniversary dinners they'd ever had.

Through her new contacts, Fleur has also been invited to speak at a number of upcoming meetings for the Country Women's Association and the University of the Third Age.

The Mallee experience demonstrates that there are always opportunities to engage different sectors of the community in water resource education and awareness.