



**Monitoring Information**  
6 groups, 14 participants, 109 sites  
**Education Participation** 3 190 participants  
**Coordinator FTE** 1.4  
**Program Budget** \$161 000

## Culture in the Catchment

Want to participate in a canoe tour with a difference? The Culture in the Catchment Canoe Tour gives participants the opportunity to experience aboriginal folklore, cultural life, anecdotes, traditional dancing, bush tucker and environmental information about Gippsland's Lake Tyers.

Waterwatch Coordinators



Becky Hemming



Fiona Stevens



Nicole Harris

This East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (EGCMA)-initiated project aims to better support the local indigenous community, increase environmental awareness of the wider community and visitors, and potentially create a sustainable business. Robert Andy, EGCMA's Indigenous Community Partnerships Officer, has overseen the project's development, including the training of two part-time indigenous employees in all aspects of the tour management.



Dancer Ivan Hood provides visitors a taste of East Gippsland's cultural heritage. (Photo courtesy of Chris Lewis)



At present, canoe tours are run on a weekly basis. Rob said "The cultural identity is most important; this is the way we have survived for thousands of years. We provide a view of the aboriginal lifestyle within the catchment and the resources around the area that relate to the survival of our people".

Through the program, Waterwatch has been able to provide training and skills in monitoring techniques, while learning more about the local environment from the indigenous employees. "We enjoy being able to share their local knowledge and stories through Waterwatch to our volunteers and students," said Waterwatch Coordinator Bec Hemming. "The tour guides are regular monitors and share their water quality knowledge with the wider community on the tours."

This unique partnership seems to be having the desired impact on those involved. One canoe tour participant reflected "It is great to be able to see all of the environmental and cultural aspects within a small pocket of our country. Who would have ever thought I could learn so much on a one day canoe tour? I know what a Wy-yang (duck), Boora (eel), Kinedaa (fish) and Tiddlek (frog) are now!"

Robert Andy shows off the water wonders of Lake Tyers. (Photo courtesy of Chris Lewis)

### Waterwatch Objective 4:

Establish and maintain effective partnerships between the community and catchment managers



The Orbest Angling Club began monitoring the Snowy River estuary in May 2006 after watching their estuary change over the years; and after hearing about estuaries having fish kills from low dissolved oxygen levels. Poorly managed opening of estuaries can also have a detrimental impact on people's livelihoods. By becoming involved in Waterwatch, the Orbest community is more connected with the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority's decisions about the estuary, and has developed an appreciation for the complexity of managing an opening.



The local community are helping to manage the unique Snowy River estuary.



Frank Van Ekren of Orbest Angling Club and Mike Irvine of Parks Victoria test a water sample.

### Waterwatch Objective 3:

Increase community involvement in water management decisions and gain community commitment to action in addressing waterway and catchment issues



Develing's Inlet is one of many beautiful sites monitored by Joyce Henry.



Water quality testing is one way of keeping an eye on waterway health.

Monitoring the health of Mallecoota's waterways has become more than just an interesting hobby for Joyce Henry. Waterwatching since 2002, Joyce diligently monitors the water quality at 21 sites monthly, and undertakes bi-annual macro invertebrate sampling. These activities have helped Joyce understand the issues in her local area, including the effects of reduced flow, weed invasion, stormwater, sediment loads and litter. This information is of particular interest to East Gippsland Shire Council, for managing Mallecoota catchments.



### Waterwatch Objective 2:

Involve communities monitoring their local waterways to collect and provide data which is credible, accepted and used

### Waterwatch Objective 5:

Provide school learning opportunities and be an integral part of the curriculum



Swifts Creek Primary students identify marine creatures and how they can help protect our environment.

Enjoy fishing? 'Well you'd better look after your catchment' was the resonating message from East Gippsland Waterwatch's Squidgy Kids Fishing Day at Paynesville. Over 80 children registered in the flathead fishing competition, learning more about the local lakes and rivers, fishing and marine safety along the way. Guest speaker was fishing legend Kaj 'Bushy' Bush - "It is great to see all the little youngsters learning about the lakes and rivers and how important it is to look after it all, particularly for the future of our fishing".



"Squidgy Kids" getting involved and educated at the flathead fishing competition.

### Waterwatch Objective 1:

Increase community awareness, understanding and ownership of water issues and their relationship to catchment health

### Other outstanding highlights and achievements

Winner of 2006 Regional Landcare Awards (Education category).

Winner of 2006 Victorian Coastal Award for Excellence (Gippsland Lakes Relay).

Waterwatch monitors Joyce Henry and Nicholson Angling Club - finalists of the 2006 Regional Landcare Award (Rivercare category).

**Partners/Sponsors** Natural Heritage Trust, East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, SGS Environmental Services, Department of Sustainability and Environment, East Gippsland Shire, East Gippsland Water.

Photos courtesy of East Gippsland Waterwatch (unless otherwise specified).