

# World Wetlands Day 2008

World Wetlands Day celebrations opened in style this year. On the evening of 1 February, artists, natural resource managers and the local community gathered together at Mildura's gallery 25 to celebrate the opening of the Mallee CMA's very first wetlands artistic exhibition—'Wetlands Wet and Dry: A Study of Water Without Water'.

The theme of the exhibition was inspired by the unique ephemeral nature of many of our Mallee wetlands. Ephemeral wetlands depend on a cycle of both wet and dry periods.

Over 100 people attended the event, and local artists commented that they thought it was the 'second biggest opening' that gallery 25 had ever held. With assistance from Mildura's thriving art community, an exhibition was the perfect way for the Mallee CMA to tap into a new audience. 'It's a wonderful opportunity to bring art and science together', said exhibition curator, Jennifer Matthews.

While over 30 submissions were received by the Mallee CMA from artists keen to show off their artistic talent, there was only room for 19 pieces. The pieces chosen are diverse, ranging from installations, photography and paintings, to ink prints. The winning entries of the World Wetlands Day amateur photography and creative writing competition are also being displayed as part of the exhibition. The exhibition can be viewed at gallery 25, 25 Deakin Ave Mildura until 26 February.

Celebrations didn't stop with the art exhibition. On Sunday 3 February, a community day was held next to the Psyche Bend Pumphouse at Kings Billabong.

From fish naming competitions to bicycle riding, there was something for everyone this year at World Wetlands Day. Some participants chose to be active — dip netting for macro-invertebrates, participating in an historical walk, or bike riding through the reserve. Others took a more restful and creative approach to the day — visiting the information stands, watching the historic Psyche Bend steam pumps in action, making turtles and painting fish at the arts and crafts tables. One lucky winner, Annetta Evans from Red Cliffs, was the winner of the major competition for the day — winning her very own kayak, kindly sponsored by Sunraysia Marine.

Events held on World Wetlands Day, which marks the anniversary of the signing of the Ramsar Convention on wetlands, aim to build relationships with the catchment community in the north of the Mallee region, and introduce them to the importance and value of wetlands in their local area.

The events are part of the Mallee CMA's wetlands campaign, which aims to raise the profile of wetlands across the Mallee CMA region, and encourage further community engagement in wetland restoration, conservation and rehabilitation.

The success of World Wetlands Day 2008 can be attributed to the involvement of numerous agencies, organisations and community groups who helped to organise the exhibition and community day. Contributors included the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, the Department of Sustainability and Environment, Friends of Kings Billabong, GHD, Landcare, Lower Murray Darling CMA, Lower Murray Water, Mallee CMA, Mildura Rural City Council, Mildura Lions Club, Murray-Darling Freshwater Research Centre, NSW Murray Wetlands Working Group, Parks Victoria, Ramsar, Ramsays Camera House, Steam Preservation Society, Stefano de Pieri and Donata Carrazza, Sunraysia Bicycle Users Group, Sunraysia Marine, Trentham Estate and Waterwatch.