



What is it?

River Detectives is a Victorian Waterwatch environmental education program for schools and groups working with young people.

Facilitators of the program train educators (teachers and volunteers) to monitor habitat, water science and waterbugs at a local waterway.

Through training and involvement in the program, teachers and students develop their knowledge of catchments and waterway health, and participation in the program allows groups to increase their skills base by using water science kits and waterbug monitoring equipment. Data collected by the junior citizen scientists is entered into the River Detectives portal and contributes to the Victorian Waterwatch database.

Inspiring our future leaders to be stewards of the environment

Who is involved?

Four Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs): Corangamite CMA, North Central CMA, North East CMA, Wimmera CMA and Melbourne Water.

Where?



99

Sites monitored across the state

218

sets of data entered

How many?

4000

junior citizen scientists in Victoria

From 104 schools/groups, both primary and secondary

207

educators trained

Through 29 water science and waterbug professional learning workshops across the state

Coloured fish pop up to help schools rate the quality of their water when entering water quality data into the database

Outcomes

- Engaging junior citizen scientists in a project that contributes to Natural Resource Management
- Collaboration of ideas, resources and systems across organisations
- Allows flexible engagement for schools from monthly testing, to a term focus and to build it into larger projects
- Links across the community and builds a connection to a local waterway

- Hands-on, real life science activities that provide an opportunity for students to learn outside the classroom
- 99% of teachers were likely to change their practice after attending workshops
- 79% of teachers increased their knowledge by a reasonable amount after attending professional learning workshops

"We participated in the program because we wanted the students to be able to help scientists collect data about rivers and learn how important rivers are to our lives".
Michael, Mitta Mitta Primary School

"The students loved the water quality testing but they really just loved the opportunity to be outdoors and be in the environment."
Sarah, East Loddon P-12

"At our school we want to target real life learning, the River Detectives program slotted in nicely."
Nick, Little Bendigo Primary School

"I didn't know much about the topic before and it [professional learning session] gave me the confidence to do it with the kids."
Damien, Murtoa Primary School

"For the school community to be partnered with other organisations is a positive in itself."
Michelle, Footscray City College

Connecting online across the state by:

- Chat forum (Billabong Banter)
- Data portal
- Interactive map of Victoria
- Fun and interactive learning resources linked to the Victorian curriculum
- Virtual learning sessions where students can 'Ask the Expert'

For the future

The River Detectives team wants to build on the 2017 pilot program to create more junior citizen scientists. The resources and program will continue to develop to support schools to learn about, and connect to, their local waterway.



CONTACT

Cass Davis and Sophie Pritchard
www.riverdetectives.net.au | riverdetectives@nccma.vic.gov.au