



Waterwatch & EstuaryWatch
Citizen science in
Victoria's waterways
Glanelg Hopkins

Regional Report
2019-2020

Glanelg Hopkins



CMA



Environment,
Land, Water
and Planning



Victoria sustains a vibrant history of community-based environmental monitoring and citizen science programs, including the Waterwatch and EstuaryWatch programs. These programs are instrumental in informing waterway management decisions while strengthening community engagement and fostering environmental stewardship and advocacy. Catchment management authorities, water authorities, local government and other delivery partners play a crucial role in facilitating the programs.

Through the EstuaryWatch and Waterwatch programs, citizen scientists are supported and encouraged to become actively involved in local waterway monitoring and on-ground activities. Citizen scientists involved in the 2019-2020 programs contributed a total of **232,580** hours to care for our waterways, equivalent to 31,011 volunteer days. This contribution provides an economic value of the 2019-2020 volunteer effort of **\$9,707,889**. For more information, see the Waterwatch & EstuaryWatch Citizen science in Victoria's waterways Annual Achievements Report 2019-2020.

Aboriginal Acknowledgement:

EstuaryWatch and Waterwatch proudly acknowledge Victoria's Aboriginal community and their rich culture and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge Aboriginal people as Australia's first peoples and as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which we rely. We recognise and value the ongoing contribution of Aboriginal people and communities to Victorian life and how this enriches us. We embrace the spirit of reconciliation, working towards the equality of outcomes and ensuring an equal voice.

Regional Stats



31

Event Participants



2

Active Groups



9

Active Sites



13

Active Volunteers

If you are interested in participating in citizen science in your region, please contact Glenelg Hopkins CMA on (03) 5571 2526 or visit <https://www.ghcma.vic.gov.au/>.

A Decade Devoted to the Hopkins

Back in 2010, Dina Selman and Ashley Zanker joined 25 other people on a boat cruise along the Hopkins River to enjoy the local sights and learn about a new 'water monitoring' opportunity.

This occasion marked the formation of the Hopkins EstuaryWatch team, followed by ten amazing years of dedicated data collection and new friendships.

Today, as founding members and stalwarts of the Hopkins EstuaryWatch team, Dina and Ash have an appreciation of the estuary system well beyond the 2010 sight-seeing tour. They've observed and recorded physical and chemical changes in the recreationally popular waterway throughout the seasons including floods and storm surges.

As a newcomer to Warrnambool in 2010, and with a keen interest in science, Dina was motivated to get involved with EstuaryWatch. She recalls, "It was a great way to learn more about Warrnambool and its habitats and meet people from different backgrounds."

Since then, practical observations and training opportunities have broadened Dina's knowledge of estuary processes and functions; something she happily shares with friends and acquaintances in casual conversations. "I'm now much more familiar with the river and its habitats. I enjoy seeing the changes with the seasons and different weather events, and how that impacts river mouth changes and the water. If I'm aware that there may be a mouth opening, I'll visit regularly," Dina said.

Ash also clearly recalls jumping onboard the river boat in 2010, with his wife Dianne and children, to find out more about EstuaryWatch and the significant role it offered the river they loved. "We live near the Hopkins and just love the water,

whether it's the river or the ocean. We were keen to take part in ongoing monitoring for the enjoyment, the opportunity to learn and to contribute to public knowledge." Ash has a lead role in recording the Hopkins River mouth status each month. "I've loved watching the ever-changing conditions and how the mouth evolves, as well as learning about the berms and chemistry changes. It's given me a really good insight into how estuaries work."

Dina and Ash both recognise the significant land use changes that have occurred along the Hopkins River since they began collecting information and data, particularly the growth in new housing developments. "There was so much vacant land in the area when we first started; paddocks on sandstone beds. Now a lot of this area has been replaced with bitumen and rooves," Ash said. "It will be interesting to see any trends or changes in the data over time."

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Dina Selman,
Founding member and stalwart of
the Hopkins EstuaryWatch team



Dina Selman has been keeping a close eye on water chemistry conditions in the Hopkins estuary for a decade. Credit GCMCA.

For the Love of Nature

To James and Eleanor Cowell, the natural world is remarkable and provides an ever-changing source of fascination. This lifelong passion for nature has led the couple to pursue various ways to support and protect natural habitats and animals in their local area.

Naturally, the Cowells are passionate bird watchers and wildlife photographers. They have also devoted much of their time to native revegetation and Landcare projects and supported numerous conservation organisations over the years.

Since retiring, the active pair found room for one more environment protection quest and joined the Merri EstuaryWatch team in July 2019.

Their enthusiasm for bird watching and photography promises to elevate the data portal with valuable site observations of birdlife along the Merri River and its wetlands, in addition to the standardised EstuaryWatch measurements.

With a rural property along the Merri River, James and Eleanor have long been aware of the important connection between the land and waterways, and the need to protect these natural ecosystems.

They look forward to witnessing the changes within the Merri estuary through monitoring events. “Estuaries are interesting, dynamic places with a lot going on,” James said. “Joining EstuaryWatch coincides with our interest in the natural world.”

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**James Cowell,
Merri EstuaryWatch**



EstuaryWatch team members Tom Sheehan, James Cowell and Eleanor Cowell monitoring Merri River mouth conditions as well as identifying and recording bird species at monitoring sites. Credit GHCMA.