

## *A REFLECTION*

### **WORLD WETLANDS DAY 2ND FEBRUARY**

#### **WETLANDS SUPPORT FISHERIES; KEEP THEM HEALTHY**

**Inland and coastal wetlands** are important breeding grounds for many wetland species. Fish is the primary source of animal protein for over one billion people in the world. Inland aquaculture is one way in which humans utilize the natural resources wetlands provide. They support large scale fisheries, as well as small scale fish farms.

Wetlands play an important role in the ecosystem, in species conservation, economic and community development, as well as in cultural heritage. Unfortunately, consistent over fishing has greatly threatened the sustainability of wetland fisheries.

According to information from the Ramsar Secretariat, 75% of commercially important marine fisheries and most inland fisheries are over fished to an unsustainable level.

For more information visit  
[http://www.ramsar.org/wwd/wwd\\_index.htm](http://www.ramsar.org/wwd/wwd_index.htm)

Often the first reaction of humans to wetlands, swamps, mangroves and marshes is to drain these 'unpleasant' lands, bulldoze their vegetation, and fill them in – sometimes using them as refuge tips for human waste.

By contrast, a few of these watery environments have acquired iconic status in Australia. Who cannot be taken aback by the multi-faceted beauty of the Kakadu wetlands and the freshwater life they spawn? Who cannot be impressed by the transformation of the lower Murray marshes when the river is regenerated enough to fill them and the Murray Cod again thrives?

But also spare a thought for the humble mangroves of the bays and protect them from the outflow of human effluent. Spare a thought for the lowly local lagoon and shield it from the flush of chemical fertilizers. Spare a thought for the now-dry wetlands cut off from their yearly watery inundation and switch off the thirsty irrigation pumps.

May we respond to the call of Hopkins:  
*What would the world be, once bereft  
Of wet and of wildness? Let them be left,  
O let them be left, wildness and wet,  
Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet.*  
Then, in the replenished wetness of the wild, all aquatic life can flourish.

Have you read *Postmodern Wetlands* by Rodney James Gilbert? This book explores the representation of wetlands in western culture. For many, wetlands are a place of disease and horror often associated with the melancholy and the monstrous; in short, they are 'black waters'. Yet, ecologically, wetlands are vitally important for life on earth: they are 'living' waters. Gilbert produces a cultural critique of wetlands as both living and black waters. Drawing on a wide range of disciplines and methodologies, he analyses wetlands in relation to aesthetics and philosophy, cities and human psychology, mythology and narrative and medical, military, social and conservation history. He refers to British, American and Australian wetlands.