GOOSEPONDS: UNDER THREAT

Barra to battle tilapia

Volunteers release 1000 native fish to combat invaders

Chris Lees
chris.lees@dailymercury.com.au

CHAOS ensued as about 30 people helped release 1000 barramundi into the Gooseponds.

There were plenty of smiles on children's faces as they let the fish go free on Saturday.

However the reason for the release was much more serious. It's hoped the barramundi destroy one of the world's most invasive species, the tilapia, by eating them out of house and home.

Reef Catchment aquatic habitats co-ordinator Tim Marsden said tilapia were discovered there in early April.

"What we're doing here is we're releasing 300mm barramundi, so they're quite large already," he said.

"A lot of the tilapia that we have in the system are quite small, so we're looking for these barramundi to go on the hunt.

"They haven't been fed for about two or three days so ... they're going to go into the water really, really hungry, so hopefully they get on to their job straight away."

Mr Marsden said the closest tilapia infestation was at least 300km away.

"Someone has had to have put them in a bucket and transported them that way," he said.

Mr Marsden said there were lots of local anglers helping with the release.

PEST CONTROL: Balin Tweddle and Cooper Bell release barramundi into the Gooseponds to stop tilapia taking over the water system.   PHOTO: LEE CONSTABLE

"Our local fishermen really don't want to see heaps of tilapia," he said. "They want to go and catch barra and jacks and all the really good Australian fish."

Alan Tweddle was one of about 30 people, nicknamed the Tilapia Army, who volunteered their time. "We live locally and we have a vested interest in this," he said.

"It's a good place to take the kids to go fishing."

Anyone with information on tilapia should phone the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.