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FISHING

# Taking action on fish threat

## Tilapia is a serious danger to biodiversity

By LANCE MURRAY

AS MOST readers will know, we have had an infestation of tilapia in The Gooseponds at North Mackay.

Tilapia is listed in the top 100 of the world's worst introduced species and is regarded as one of the greatest threats to Australia's native biodiversity.

Most tilapia infestations are caused by people.

In this case, marine biologists consider their presence in The Gooseponds the result of a family disposing of their pet aquarium fish.

Once established in a flowing river or creek, tilapia are almost impossible to eradicate.

We are blessed in some way that this infestation was discovered by Tim Marsden, a marine biologist attached to Reef Catchments in Mackay.

Had any other person found these invasive fish, chances are it may have been too late

As part of the eradication program, 1000 300mm barramundi were introduced to the waterways last Saturday.

The next important phase of the program is the removal of aquatic weeds in

The Gooseponds.

Mackay Recreational Fishers Inc, in partnership with Mackay Area Fish Stocking association, is amassing volunteers called the Tilapia Army for a weekend working bee that, if the weather is kind, will be held on a weekend later this month.

In September, another 1000 barramundi will be released in the upper reaches of The Gooseponds catchment.

Fingers crossed this biological trial has a happy ending, otherwise our fish nurseries from Cape Conway to Cape Palmerstone in five to 10 years time will be under serious threat.

And here's hoping we do not have a flood event until late this year, which will flush the barra and any remaining tilapia out into a marine environment.

Anyone wishing to assist can phone Lance Murray 0411 550 684 or email [lancemurray@mcs.net.au](mailto:lancemurray@mcs.net.au) or Keith Day at [keith.day@crawlco.net.au](mailto:keith.day@crawlco.net.au).



LANCE MURRAY:

We are blessed in some way that this infestation was discovered.



Richard Brookman of Seaforth Road had a big day out "in the office" and here's proof, two barra, the biggest 93 cm and 9.5kg, and its mate, 83 cm and tipping the scales at 7kg.



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**INTO BATTLE:** Balin Tweddle with one of the barramundi released into The Gooseponds to help bring the tilapia under control.



**RIGHT:** Dylan Everett with a barramundi ready to be released into The Gooseponds.

PHOTOS: LEE CONSTABLE



**TOP CATCH:** Catherine Thwaite caught this jewfish at Seaforth using strip fish for bait.

PHOTOS: CONTRIBUTED