



Yellowbelly: the fecund Warrego nursery

Do you know that the Warrego River is a super-rich nursery for yellowbelly (Golden Perch)?

We have been studying the fish in the Warrego for the last 6 years and we have noticed that when there is a good flow we get plenty, and we mean plenty, of baby yellowbelly in our study area near the junction of the Warrego and Darling Rivers. These baby yellowbelly are often very small, sometimes only 30 mm in length and are just several weeks old (Figure 2).

These fish aren't as fussed by the timing of flows as they are by the volume of flows. Our data show that if there is a flow, we get a breeding and recruitment event. The recruitment part is important.

Above
Mature-sized yellowbelly collected.
Photo: Gavin Butler: (NSW DPI)



Figure 1. Juvenile Yellowbelly

Other studies show that it is one thing to get fish to breed but another thing altogether to get fish larvae to develop into young fish. It seems that the Warrego offers just the right conditions to nurture yellowbelly eggs to larval stage to small fish.

Once they are small fish, these yellowbelly are much more likely to become big fish (recruits) and who doesn't love a big yellowbelly?

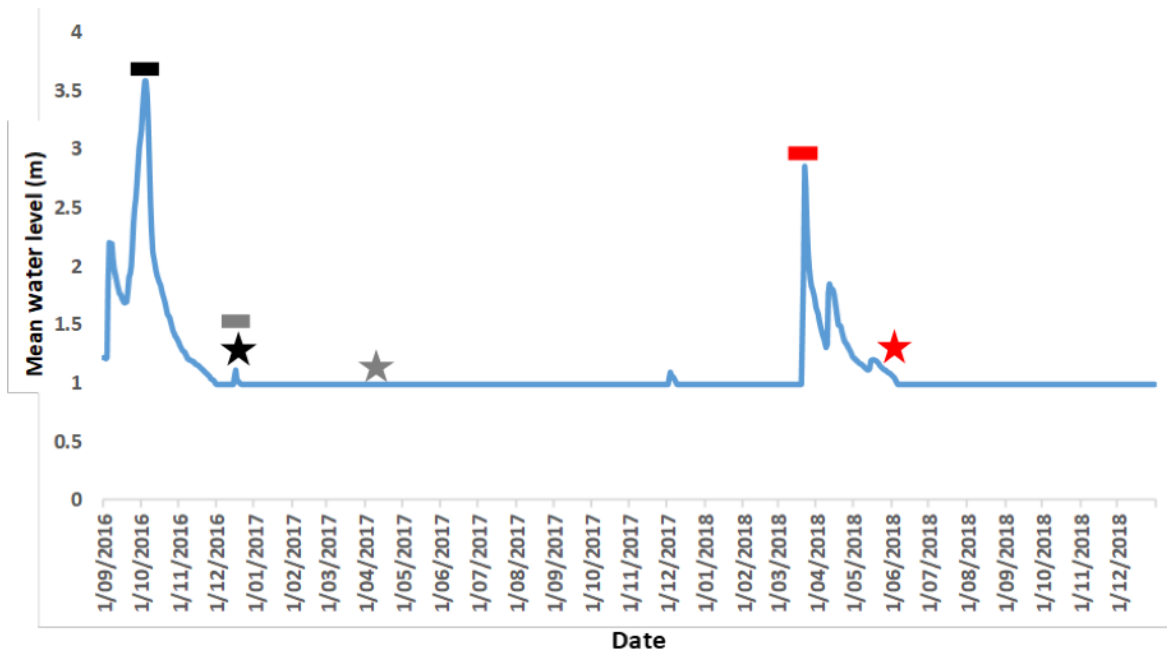


Figure 2. When the Warrego flows (the peaks) we have found that yellow belly breed (the little rectangles) and then a few weeks later they arrive in our study area as happy little fish (the stars)

The fish spawned with every flow and we found recruitment even during very small flows (Figure 2).

We are now starting to look into just how important the Warrego is for yellowbelly recruitment in the entire Murray-Darling Basin.

When the Warrego has a big flow, that connects it to the Darling, we think that it may be really significant for system-wide yellow belly population

Warrego-Darling MER
Monitoring Evaluation Research

For more on MER check out:
<https://www.environment.gov.au/water/cewo/monitoring/mer-program>



The Commonwealth Environmental Water Office (CEWO)
funds the Monitoring and Evaluation Research (MER) Project.