

- ✓ Look.
- ✓ Act.
- ✓ Protect.



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Help stop freshwater pests in Victoria's waterways

We all have a role in protecting Victoria's waterways from freshwater pests.

It's a priority for anyone who uses or enjoys our unique freshwater environments.

Freshwater pests are non-native or native plants and animals that have been introduced into waters where they do not naturally occur. They have entered Victoria from other parts of the world or even other Australian waters. Freshwater pests live in waterways such as rivers, wetlands, channels, reservoirs and dams. There is a wide range of freshwater pest organisms, including species of plants, algae, fish, turtles, frogs, snails, leeches, crayfish and insects.

Freshwater pests can be difficult to see because they can live or hide underwater, and some are very small. Some freshwater pests are hard to identify and may be confused with similar-looking local native species. People can spread freshwater pests without realising it.



Red-eared Slider Turtle © Debbie Koenigs/USFWS



Salvinia © Agriculture Victoria



Arrowweed © Tony Dugdale



Weatherloach © Gunther Schmida

The problem with freshwater pests

Freshwater pests harm our environments and biodiversity and can have a big impact on people's lives and their livelihoods.

Freshwater pest, plants and algae can:

- choke water channels and block water flow
- affect water quality by reducing oxygen levels, restricting light, and changing water temperature
- outcompete native plants.

Freshwater pest animals can:

- eat native species, or compete with them for food, habitat and resources
- damage habitats and degrade water quality
- carry diseases and parasites that can transfer to native animals
- be venomous or poisonous.

Freshwater pests can damage any items they come into contact with, including boats and other vessels, equipment (such as fishing rods, paddles, hiking boots and wetsuits), pipes, pumps, jetties and bridges. They can affect how people use waterways for irrigation, boating, fishing, swimming, hiking, camping and other activities, and aesthetic appeal can be lost.

Freshwater pests can reproduce quickly and rapidly spread to new areas. They are very difficult and expensive to get rid of once in a waterway, so it's more effective to prevent their introduction or to detect new freshwater pests as early as possible, to avoid potentially devastating consequences.



Snakehead © Gunther Schmida

How are freshwater pests introduced and spread?

People can accidentally or deliberately introduce and spread freshwater pests in various ways, including:

- on boats, other vessels, trailers and vehicles
- on fishing gear, ropes, anchors, hiking boots and other equipment
- through water contained in motors, bilges, wells and portable bait containers
- through release of live bait
- as contaminants of fish stocking
- by allowing species to escape from garden ponds, private dams or aquaculture facilities
- as unauthorised introductions, such as illegal fish stocking, illegal imports and trade, dumping of unwanted aquarium pets or aquatic plants, or releases for cultural or spiritual reasons
- in water diversions.



Tips on how you can help stop freshwater pests

For everyone

- Learn about our local native freshwater species and look out for freshwater pests.
- Report suspected findings or sightings of freshwater pests to the Victorian Government.
- Adhere to rules in the *Fisheries Act 1995* and *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*.
- Do not move plants or animals between waterways.
- Never return freshwater pests to the water.

For people using waterways

- Check, clean and dry boats, kayaks, jet skis, other vessels, trailers, fishing gear, ropes, anchors, hiking boots and other gear between waterways and after every trip. Remove any attached plants, animals, water and sediment and put them in a bin (don't put them back into the water).
- Drain water from your vessels and gear onto the ground. Don't let it drain back into a waterway.
- Don't use live noxious aquatic species as bait.
- Dispose of unwanted live bait in a bin.

For people with aquariums, garden ponds or private dams

- Own permitted plants and animals only. Buy pets and plants from licensed retailers to help stop illegal import and trade.
- Use local native freshwater plants and animals in garden ponds and private dams.
- Never release aquarium pets or contents into or near waterways or down toilets or drains.
- Take care when cleaning aquariums and garden ponds to prevent water, animals, plants and sediment from ending up in waterways.
- Don't use unwanted pets as fishing bait.
- Rehome or dispose of unwanted pets correctly and humanely – contact a veterinarian or pet retailer for guidance.
- Dispose of unwanted plants and cuttings in the bin.
- Don't give unwanted plants to friends or neighbours – it spreads the problem.
- Screen garden ponds and private dams to prevent accidental escapes in overflow.

For people with aquaculture businesses

- Obtain an aquaculture licence and comply with the licence conditions.
- Only farm species and conduct activities approved under your licence.
- Meet biosecurity requirements, for example, by preventing accidental escapes.

It's everyone's responsibility to protect Victoria's waterways

Community, industry and the Victorian Government are working together to manage freshwater pests to protect and preserve our waterways for future generations.

How to report freshwater pests

Please report any unusual, strange or exotic plant or animal found or sighted in Victorian waterways to the Victorian Government, particularly if you suspect you've found or sighted a freshwater pest outside of its known location in Victoria. Phone the Victorian Government on **136 186**.

When making a report please include:

- your name, phone number and email address
- the name or a brief description of the plant or animal you wish to report
- the number of plants or animals found or sighted
- the date and time of the sighting
- location where the plant or animal was found or sighted (GPS coordinates or specific references to streets or landmarks are helpful)
- photographs (critical for identification).

Further information

For further information about freshwater pests, please call the Victorian Government on **136 186** or visit:

Agriculture Victoria

www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/biosecurity

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

www.delwp.vic.gov.au

Victorian Fisheries Authority

www.vfa.vic.gov.au

Victoria's unwanted freshwater pests

The following species are some of Victoria's unwanted freshwater pests.

Red-eared Slider Turtle



Asian Black-spined Toad



Alligator Gar



Snakehead



Quagga Mussel and Zebra Mussel



Water Hyacinth



Alligator Weed



Salvinia





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