

Six thousand pairs of pelicans nesting near Balranald

Thousands of pelicans have been nesting in the lower Murrumbidgee valley for the first time in recorded history.

On an exposed bank in the middle of a swamp near Balranald in south-western NSW, 6000 pairs built their nests and are now raising a new generation of pelicans. The amorous birds took up residence at the site following floods late last year.

The breeding site is located within the Nimmie Caira – a lower Murrumbidgee floodplain wetland system with numerous flow paths which can deliver water to key wetlands throughout the floodplain.

The Murrumbidgee valley pelicans are a separate colony to the 4000 pairs also breeding in inland NSW [at Lake Brewster](#), some 350km away.

The NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) has been working with the local water and land managers to co-ordinate the delivery of 10,000 megalitres of Commonwealth and NSW environmental water to the site to provide protection and food for the pelicans.

Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder David Papps said large bird breeding colonies such as this one were a sign that the entire ecosystem is booming.

“Large pelican colonies are a rarity in the Lowbidgee floodplains and we understand that this colony is the first of its kind,” said Mr Papps.

OEH had been delivering environmental water to the lakes surrounding the site before the recent floods, building up the health of the lakes and their fish populations and providing ideal places for the adult pelicans to feed.

Environmental water manager at OEH, James Maguire, said that when the flood waters began to recede, the site had to be ‘topped up’ with environmental water to ensure the young birds could reach maturity.

“Pelicans are notoriously fickle when it comes to water levels surrounding their breeding sites,” Mr Maguire said.

“There was a risk the birds might abandon their nests if the water got too low.

“Pelicans do not breed regularly, but when they do, they might breed two or three times in that season which is why supporting this impressive breeding event is so important.”

ENDS

Images for media: Photo album of the pelican rookery at <https://flic.kr/s/aHskYLBWCL>. Drone footage is also available upon request – contact media@environment.nsw.gov.au.

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