

OH 61/1 - Interview with Jack Heinicke

TAPE 1, SIDE B - Environmental problems

It's hard to know what the effects of any one change have been, I suppose.

That's right. I think the main trouble now is the seepage. That's the biggest change now. The trees have all died, and the seepage coming back from the fruit blocks, that's about the biggest change of the lot. I think the fruit blocks should be shifted miles back from the river, pump the fresh water out there and keep the river fresh.

P'raps eventually it would all find its way back into the river.

If you took it far enough away it wouldn't. And they know now that they'd have to put drains in when they put the blocks in, and find places to put the drainage water. The further it would have to travel back, the fresher the water'd get; moving back through the sand and stuff, would actually sieve the water out. It'd come back as fresh water. Whereas while it's just on the fruit blocks, just on the bank, it's naturally just coming straight through.

Do you feel that that's affected the fish?

Well, it could've, especially chemicals, that could affect them, yes.

But it's more the other things, like the trees.

Yeah, the trees dying - all the nice clean flats are all gone salty.

I suppose another change has been the river regulation itself, holding the water level reasonably

Yes, since the locks have been put in, that's definitely kept the water a lot higher; that would kill a lot of trees out. Made a lot of salt lakes, big swamps, where they used to go dry before the locks were put in. Now there's water over them all time. Definitely have more fish in there I s'pose; they got more water to swim around in. The European carp, he loves the backwaters.

So that's another change that you've seen, the carp coming and they keep the water muddy, whereas before it would clarify.

Carp and the redfin, that's two fish that should never have been put in the

river. Redfin are the big one that does a lot of damage.

In what way?

Eating the young fish. He's a real cannibal. Anything that moves he'll eat. He'd be taking a lot of the fish out, the little ones. I think he does as much damage as the carp does, if not more.

What about some of the other fish that have been brought into the river? Did you ever see – I believe trout have been introduced a few times, at least.

I never ever caught any trout. They put the tench in, but he seems to have died out too. I've haven't seen a tench since the carp came in. Well, I don't see why they want to put any fish in here for. We've got to have the best native fish in the world, so why put others in?

I agree with you totally. I suppose we're lucky now to be speaking now from an enlightened point of view. I mean the carp were an accidental introduction, weren't they? They kind of got washed in from a dam, I take it.

Yeah, I believe he started in Mildura somewhere. Some put in up there somewhere.

The redfin was brought in on purpose.

Yeah, they were brought in on purpose. Another of the white man's mistakes.