

# River Murray turtles

## Why are they important?

Turtles are the “vacuum cleaners” of the river.

All three River Murray turtle species eat carrion (dead animals).

During a fish-kill, ammonia & dissolved oxygen levels return to normal **much faster** where there are turtles present.

A 2018 study by Claudia Santori, conducted near Murray Bridge, shows the important role turtles play in keeping the river and wetlands clean. Turtles are very effective at removing dead animal carcasses. They can strip a carcass in 3-6 days which would otherwise take 25-27 days to decompose.



Turtle weaving by Yvonne Koolmatrie. Image used with artist's permission.

Turtle rock art at Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park on the River Murray near Nildottie. Image used with permission.

Turtles are very significant to First Nations groups along the River Murray and Lower Lakes.

They feature in First Nations' creation stories which have been passed down from generation to generation for thousands of years.

Turtles are Ngartjis (totems or special friends) for some First Nations people.

Turtles were an important part of traditional life for First Nations people. Turtles and their eggs were eaten and their shells were used as drinking vessels.



10 days  
NO  
turtles  
present



10 days  
with  
turtles  
present



Image: C Santori



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