



# Scientists seek key to ID mayflies

## Water quality link to bugs

BY BRIDGET FITZGERALD

BORDER researchers are hosting a two-day aquatic ecology workshop this week as part of a world class insect identification study regarding water quality.

In order to develop an identification key that can be used by the public and environmental agencies, the Taxonomic Research and Information Network is holding the workshop on Australian mayflies as indicators of high water quality.

The La Trobe University mayfly study is unique to the Department of Environmental Management and Ecology at the Albury-Wodonga campus after a \$600,000 grant from the Commonwealth Environmental Research Facilities.

Grant recipient Associate Professor Phil Suter said that the web-based identification key could be used by the public because it would be based on the physical appearance of the insect.

"The traditional key can really only be used by someone who knows a bit about insect ID," Dr Suter said.

"The web key means you can follow your own identification path, so if the insect has back wings then you can know that and narrow down the potential insect pool."

The grant has enabled the university

to employ Dr Jeffery Webb as a post-doctoral fellow which has increased their capacity to research the mayfly, particularly from a DNA level.

"Having Jeff on board has meant we've made twice as many discoveries, it has caused an explosion of knowledge," Dr Suter said.

"What we have previously seen as one species, we now know are several."

Dr Webb said that the workshop was an excellent way to bridge the gap between the researchers and those who would be making use of their technology.

"It's great to bring the scientists together with the people who use the information," he said.

"We've got people here from Victorian and NSW EPA, museums, the NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water and local La Trobe resident students."

The updated key will not only be used by environmental agencies, but also companies who need information on water quality.

"It can effectively be used by any consultants doing things where they need to know the quality of water," Dr Suter said.

"It's not until people have these tools that they can use them."

  
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● **Dr Phil Suter with some adult mayflies.** Picture: KYLIE GOLDSMITH