

## **ABCTV news, Sunday 28 October 2007**

**Newsreader:** Scientists say the continuing drought is decimating our waterbird population. The national aerial survey of half the continent shows that most of Australia's prime bird habitat has dried up, and where there was once thousands of waterbirds, today they are few and far between.

**Reporter:** Scientists have been conducting aerial surveys for a quarter of a century, but they say this year is by far the worst, major waterways are low, dams are dry and wetlands are wet no longer.

**Richard Kingsford Uni of NSW:** "In all that time we've never had a year quite as bad as this. The Murray Darling Basin wetlands are incredibly dry and we've never actually seen so little water and so few waterbirds."

**Reporter:** The surveyors flew from Queensland down the east coast to Victoria and across to South Australia. They found most of the lush prime bird habitat was disappearing and that there were few waterbirds to be seen.

**John Porter Uni of NSW:** "In a good year we would be counting in thousands at a minimum, and this year we would be counting in tens, or so, and very few species, probably only two or three species".

**Reporter:** As well as the big dry the scientists say they have never seen so many hot days in the 25 years they have been surveying the country-side and bird populations are simply not breeding.

**John Porter:** "What we can see is that some of the endangered species and less common species are also declining significantly, so we saw very few Freckled duck, and Shoveler and Blue billed ducks this year."

**Reporter:** The drought is to blame but the waterways are also under unprecedented pressure.

**Richard Kingsford:** "In the past a few flows would have gone down rivers and got into the wetlands, but really that hasn't happened for some time now, I guess equally worrying are the potential effects of climate change."

**Reporter:** With not enough water to go around scientists say their biggest worry is that some of these bird species may not recover, "**Sarah Clarke ABC news.**