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Into drink: Parks ranger John Skilton and his son Louis, 8, release Canterbury mudfish into a creek at Travis Wetland.



Tanked up: A Canterbury mudfish in a tank, ready to be released into a creek at the Travis Wetlands.

Mudfish swim free in the creek

Some 90 endangered Canterbury mudfish were released into a Travis Wetland creek last week to establish a new population.

The species is considered nationally endangered, due to the loss of 90 per cent of its habitat.

The young fish, or fingerlings, were captured five months ago in a Department of Conservation rescue plan.

They were kept at the Southern Encounter Aquarium and Kiwi House until they were big enough to survive in the wild, before being transferred to their new habitat.

Sjaan Bowie, a Canterbury Conservancy freshwater ecologist, said the operation should yield information to help with future successful transfers.

The fingerlings would be

managed and monitored in an area of the wetland free of predatory eels.

The Travis Wetland is noted for its regenerating native bush and wildlife habitat. Its waterways are home to many species of native fish, among them eels, inanga, upland bully and numerous native aquatic invertebrates.

More than 600,000 native plants have been donated by Trees for Canterbury to establish a six to eight hectare totara-matai-kahikatea forest. Christchurch Mayor Bob Parker planted a commemorative totara tree in October last year, to mark the occasion.

■ The mudfish release was carried out with help from the Travis Wetland Trust, Ngai Tahu and Christchurch City Council parks rangers.



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