

Annual Report, MCG Waterwatch: 10/11/09-7/11/10

I would feel much happier presenting this report if it were possible to have it compiled by the volunteers I work for and the students and others to whom I have presented the ideas and concepts that underlie Waterwatch. That, of course, is not going to happen, but the report should be primarily about the intangible output... how much the volunteers and students got out of being involved, and the compliance, the bean counting, should be an appendix.

So, here is a go:

I always enjoy the flurry of emails that come in around sampling time each month. Someone has found that: *'Roads have just cleared their site for a new bridge or pondage'; ... 'the EC meter gave a very curious reading, have the batteries gone flat?'; 'We saw three water dragons and heard a sacred kingfisher'; 'The algae was all orange and grey, that's not on the list!'; '... we've never had a nitrate reading here ...* and so it goes on. It is a lively chatter, full of interesting natural history and the doing of government, but also whimsy and wonder. Now when I open your 'results', I find people are critical of their own results and are fascinated by what they have found. There is a vitality in everyone's reporting!

There are nine more Waterwatchers in the MCG region than last year, and that lets us cover 12 more sites including four on Lake Burley Griffin. The students at seven primary schools, two secondary schools and two colleges were introduced to waterway science this year. To celebrate the work done by the volunteers, and to highlight our discoveries I have compiled two half-yearly CHiP reports, twelve monthly summaries, at least seven magazine articles and a book for kids! It has been a busy and enjoyable year.

APPENDIX 1: Acquittal of NRM targets by Waterwatch Coordinator.

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Catchment Health Indicators data collection:

In November 2009 we had 34 Waterwatch sites that had volunteers, although some were done only from time to time. In October 2010 we had increased that number to 46, and most were regularly reported. The table below shows the number of reports on sites sent in each month in the last year.

Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
14	19	22	25	27	34	35	32	34	45	36	40

Seasonal indicator species program:

Macro invertebrates: It is still something of a struggle to have people report on Macroinvertebrates, as while many volunteers have attended training in this skill, it is only required to be performed twice a year and most people find the identifications challenging. We did have data submitted from a small number of sites, and this was included in the two CHiP Reports.

Conspicuous Algae: Many volunteers have begun to include numbers for the conspicuous algae following training days earlier in the year. The results included in the January—June M-CHiP report show the beginnings of the program, and data since July has shown that the algae are behaving in the patterns expected, and it is thus gratifying to have some 'better than anecdotal' data. The scheme is to be presented at the Australasian Society for Limnology Congress in Thredbo in December, with the data at least starting to be analysed, and I will be in a better position to report in the December meeting.

Frogs: Analysis of the Frogwatch data of 2009 was included in the January—June M—CHiP Report. There was an increased awareness campaign this year by Frogwatch ACT in the Molonglo Catchment, which we actively supported and facilitated in preparation for Frogwatch 2010 in the third week of October.

In addition, I have analysed the frog census from 2003 to 2009 for the sites in the Molonglo catchment. These data indicate that there is a strong correlation between reports and both the immediate weather in Frogwatch week and the amount and spread of spring rains. These factors affect both the frogs and their reporters. Other information indicates that while the subcatchment with the largest number of Frogwatching groups was Sullivans Creek Sub-catchment, the number of reports of 'no frogs heard' was often most frequent in that same catchment, and the score for the catchment ranged of the poor end of Moderate in several years to well into Degraded in 2007. The Central Molonglo group of sub-catchments was the least well covered of the catchment, except for the Upper Queanbeyan sub-catchment. The lack of reports from the upper Queanbeyan comes down to the very light population of the area. After all, we get our Waterwatch reports from two or occasionally three individuals. The lack of reports on frogs in the Pialligo and Reedy Creek areas contrasts with the enthusiasm in the adjacent upper Yass area! Both the Jerrabomberra Creek and Upper Molonglo Frogwatchers have been rewarded for their enthusiasm by finding less frequently encountered frogs in quite high numbers in most years.

Platypus: The Platypus Count data does not come to me, but is sent directly to the National Platypus Conservancy in Victoria. Their website provides regular updates.

Sustainable farm practices

Land-manager training programs: My brief here is to assist, so I have had little active participation in organising events. I assisted with photography and logistics at the launch of the MCG Pest Animal Information Pack in December; I was the doorman at the Managing Horses on Small properties evening in April; I engaged with Friends of Googong (FRoG) on their first field day at Tin Hut Dam in years, and talked about suitable aquatic and riparian planting, in June; I went to the meeting at Birrigai about exchange of materials with the Gould League in July; and I have contributed to 'in house' discussions where I could.

Community Skills, Knowledge and Engagement

Indigenous interaction: Although the Crew shrank to just four, I went out, with Alison Elvin, in April, June and August, and supervised them in testing water and macroinvertebrates. I contributed to the field day at Tharwa and workshops for the curriculum committee of the ACT for the inclusion of indigenous perspectives in primary and secondary schools, in January. I also represented the Molonglo Catchment Group at the launch of the package in May.

Field days:

- Urban Waterways Steering Committee *Wetland Tour*, 14th Dec 2009
- 2010 Queanbeyan Regatta Day, 13th March
- *Tongs Hole Walk*, Hawker College & The ACT Commission for Sustainability, 16th May
- Inner North Community Fair, Dickson, 16th May
- Floriade, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 25th and 26th September
- Biodiversity and Farming Fair, Bredbo, 10th October
- Captains Flat Market Day, 6th November, 2010.

Public events and websites:

- Urban Waterways Steering Committee, 10th November 2009, 9th February 2010. Then 'ad hoc' consultant for J. Gillies/E. Robinson on The Valley Ponds project and Banksia St wetland.
- Urban Wetlands School Curriculum, release, 28th July
- NCA Lake Users Group, meetings 2nd December; 10th March; 16th June; 8th September. Also *Kingston Working Harbour project* LUG information meeting, 27th October.
- ACT Health Blue-Green Algal Monitoring Committee: 10th December 2009; 29th June 2010.

- Molonglo River Rescue committee meeting: 10th December, 2009. MRR Action Plan Launch, 29th June 2010.
- Lower Molonglo Development Display, 4th March. Between this and the STEP outing at ‘Stanhope’s Folly’ the Bush on the Boundary for Lower Molonglo arose; I was a bystander rather than a participant.
- DECCW *Who Cares About The Environment* report, Queanbeyan, 19th March
- DEWHA *Water for the future*, 1st April
- ALS Riparian Conservation Assessment Workshop, 4th May
- Radio Landcare: Sunday, 11th April
- Capital Region Platypus Census, 3rd August
- UMCCC publications release, Queanbeyan, 11th August. UMCCC Field Day and Forum, 28th and 29th October
- M2G Environmental Monitoring Body establishment committee, 15th September

Volunteer training, Groups:

- Rapid Assessment of Riparian Condition: Cusacks Crossing, Murrumbidgee R., 24th November
- Macroinvertebrates: Queanbeyan Weir, 14th November
- Conspicuous Algal Rating: Queanbeyan 17th April; Tidbinbilla 7th August
- QA/QC: Queanbeyan 29th May; Kambah 4th November 2010.
- Frog Call: 22nd July
- Introductory Frogwatch: Queanbeyan, 15th September
- Advanced Frogwatch: Barracks Flat, 11th October
- Platypus Count: Queanbeyan weir, 22nd May.

Targeted works (Volunteer Training Individuals):

While precise records have not been kept for emails, phone enquiries and office visits by Waterwatch volunteers, there would be about 20 such enquiries each month.

This year I have trained 9 new Waterwatch volunteers, who have taken on 12 sites, including three around Lake Burley Griffin.

Waterwatch Holiday program:

National Museum of Australia: 11th, 13th, 21st, 28th and 29th January; 29th September.

School visits:

While this area has been a regular involvement for the Waterwatch Coordinator, the coverage is quite narrow. Many schools became used to contacting ACTEW, and many of the south Canberra schools use SACTCG's Martin Lind.

February 2010: Ss Peter & Paul, Garran; Rosary, Watson; St Gregory's, Queanbeyan (2 days)

March 2010: Turner Primary; Merici College; Ainslie School.

April 2010: Daramalan College

May 2010: Dickson Library (3 days)

June 2010: Ainslie School

July 2010: O'Connor Community School; Radford College (2 days)

August 2010: Radford College (2 days); Radford College, senior school; Majura Joey Scouts

September 2010: Sutton Public School; Turner Primary

October 2010: Monaro High School (Cooma)

November 2010: Queanbeyan Joey Scouts.

Technical support and administration, Waterwatch:

I attended all the ACT/Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch Coordinators' meetings.

I provided a small number of aquatic plants for ACT Waterwatch display at National Botanic Gardens 14th March; as requested, I opened the Cassidy Arcade office on sampling weekends in June, July and August, and had three visitors; I supplied kits and professional support to Dr Bevis' ANU Natural Resources students for their Sullivans Creek survey, and later to an Honours student for related work at Jerrabomberra wetlands; also supported Vera Kutz from SACTCG with data and information for her on-going professional development.

Publications and website, Waterwatch:

Molonglo Catchment Health indicators Report, July—December 2009. Presented 12th April 2010.

Molonglo Catchment Health indicators Report, January—June 2010. Presented 9th August 2010.

"...in Our Catchment" for each month from November 2009 to October 2010. Several articles from these circulars have been picked up by the ACT Waterwatch quarterly newsletter and other community newsletter.

The Patience of the Water Scorpion, written by me and illustrated by Maud Rowe was published on 30th June 2010. The Queanbeyan Age for 9th July ran an article announcing this.

Several articles have been produced for the MCG webpage or the ACT Waterwatch webpage including:

You think we like this? about cyanobacteria in urban wetlands. (January)

These are not Toadstools! about mycorrhizal fungi of *Casuarina cunninghamiana*. (March)

Queanbeyan Platypus Walk Wrap-Up about the 6:00am walk along the river, in May. (May)

Conspicuous Algae as Indicators Workshop about the Queanbeyan algal training workshop. (April)

Tin Hut Dam is coming back when Tin Hut Dam and so many other waterways flowed again! (June) *An*

Evening's Frogwatching along the Queanbeyan with Dave Hunter catching frogs! (October)

Kosciuszko2Coast Biodiversity and Farming Fair about that field day. (October)

And more.

The Glove Box Guide to Aquatic Plants in the ACT and region is at the printers.

Stephen Skinner

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