

April in Our Catchment, 2010.

Autumn is definitely here. The days are shortening rapidly; the nights are cooling and at least here in Queanbeyan, the kookaburras and the king parrots are back in town. The redleg grass



looks wonderful, even when it's smutty. The paddocks are green this year, even if it's often weedy growth. Some of the waterways are quite green too, and some are a little red.

Your Results:

In some of the ponds, and where the water stays backed up as at Yass Road, the water temperature was still more summer than autumn. Certainly by Thursday, the Molonglo at the Gorge was down to 11.5°C, and very cold when it goes down the front of your waders! There wasn't a pH reading out of range, and some of the flowing water readings were at or just below 7 indicating that the recent flushings have worked well. Electrical Conductivity continues to reflect the alkaline nature of most of the geology of the catchment. Only the small retention pond at the back of North Watson had a slightly elevated turbidity. While the percent dissolved oxygen remained low in some areas (the water temperature hasn't settled to seasonal levels) only three sites (the dam at Watson, the Molonglo above the *Foxlow* railway bridge and Urialla Ck) showed dissolved oxygen below 4.5 mg/L. There is quite an amount of building activity on the ANU campus, so the elevated phosphate readings from there are understandable. Nitrate levels were satisfactory except at the David St wetland, where the *Euglena* bloom continues, and in the Molonglo at Yass Road, well above Queanbeyan! Most of the tributaries and the Molonglo River have no flow again, reflecting the 'flood&dry' nature of this catchment. It was good to hear about the gang-gangs in the Carwoola area.

The main story here is that we have had enough seasonal change to have the creeks, rivers and pondages beginning to take on winter characteristics. Let us hope we get good winter rains.

Reporting Flow: I have a feeling that the flow information, which is rather important when we need your results as back-up for the ACT flow-based data, is not being entered in the most useful way. That 'usual' category dates back to the days of the Sullivan's Creek Catchment Group, before the 2003 fire, and the expansion of the Catchment Groups. For most of you it is not indicative of what is happening. In wetlands and the regulated parts of the Molonglo above the Dairy Flat Road bridge and the part of Sullivan's Creek in the ANU 'usual' indicates that the water is behaving as the engineers want it to. It would help me interpret your findings much more easily if people indicated

- 'no flow' when there is water present, but it is not flowing, including ponds;
- 'Low flow' or 'slow flow' when there is a trickle of water up to gently moving water;
- 'moderate flow' where you can easily see that the water is moving quite rapidly;

- ‘high flow’ or ‘strong flow’ when the water is moving through your site at pace, and
- ‘flood’ when it is rushing past, carrying a load of flotsam and jetsam.

And no-one hits the ‘usual flow’ button ever again, please. The categories above are much less precise than the Gauging Station flow meters, but the categories are reconcilable with the Flow Percentiles that the ACT reports. Just in passing, the Flow based readings for the ACT, even with automatic gauges, sometimes miss the events, so the monthly data you all collect is a useful backstop.

The Conspicuous Algae Workshop:

Thank you to those who came. We had a worthwhile time, and found that everyone could quickly use the worksheet to get similar results when we went down to the River. Please go to the ACT Waterwatch website at www.act.waterwatch.org.au, go into the library and pick up the manual and the flowchart. Read through the material ... print it if you can, and add the abundance score, the form score and the rating to your results, where it says Conspicuous Algae. We really would like you all to report on algae each time. It will help us report back to you on waterway condition, and, if we have sufficient data, we may be able to take what you have done to the Australian Society for Limnology meeting in Cooma in late November.

Things for the Calendar:

15th–16th May: next sampling weekend.

16th May: 8:30 am at Stockdill Rd at the Water Quality Control centre gates, for a walk and talk in the lower Molonglo.

16th May: 10:30 am –3:00pm Inner North Community Fair at Dickson Oval

22nd May: 6:45 am in the Q Performance Centre (Lowe St) parking area, to join the Dawn Platypus Walk along the Queanbeyan River.

29th May: QA/QC barbecue and meeting at Molonglo Gorge.

Stephen Skinner

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