

December in our Catchment

Well, we missed the rain by a few days! Hopefully there will be some flow in January, and we can all really do some Waterwatching! The official rainfall for Queanbeyan for December was only 76.4 mm.

Results for the Month

Those of you who could test some water reported no flow, even in the upper Queanbeyan! There were the usual associated features: elevated Electrical Conductivity, and low Dissolved Oxygen with little or no percentage saturation. It is always amazing how animals survive such unpleasant conditions, but they do! Andy Westcott and I drove out to the Molonglo at Briars Sharrow Road and tested the water...in pools, but with tadpoles and water boatmen happily swimming among the milfoil and the stoneworts. As we were stalked by a sacred kingfisher, I can only assume there is plenty more life in those reed beds! The phosphate levels in Sullivans Ck above the university were high, but fell significantly across the campus, so those wetland pools must be doing their job.

Using the 'Comments' in your reporting.

We really do value the comments that you put in...even the frustrated cries for water! Comments about the water level are useful in the context of flow and state of the riverbank. Comments on probable sources of turbidity can help us interpret not only the turbidity but the likely source of changes in N and P, and (together with the water temperature) the dissolved oxygen potential at your sampling site. If it is clear that stock have been across the site in the last couple of days, and so the water is muddy and the Nitrate swab went pink, we know that it is a single event, and that fencing or better stock management may alleviate the problem. If there is a pile of pulled vegetation on the banks, there are more questions to be asked. If there has been a major bank slip in view of your site...there is more to do!

The comments about condition of the site are extremely important. We ask you, after you have been through the procedure and feel confident, to make a Rapid Appraisal of Riparian Condition at your site once a year. The seasons change and other things happen so we also like to get 'spot reports' on the state of things. If your site has willows, and they show sawfly damage, that's worth noting; if your Landcare group put in some shrubs and trees, and they are/are not thriving, that's worth noting; if some kind soul had a barbeque and sleep-over at your site and the place is a mess, that's worth noting. Especially within the ACT, but also in NSW on public land, we can pass on your reports about improper use of areas, and get the relevant people to follow it up! It's all part of the job, for you and me.

Comments about native vegetation and wildlife are also of remarkable value. If your site is good for platypus or water rats, and you let us know, we may well be able to find a Platypus Count volunteer to follow up your sightings. The variety and seasonal movements of the birdlife, the reptiles and the more prominent insects give us a more complete feel for the health of sites. So please take a minute to add in some site comments...they are much more than trivial!

Stephen Skinner

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