

December 2011 in our Catchment

Here we are at Midsummer (I'm writing this on the 20th) and we still haven't had three hot days! Well, at least the water table is well filled and the landscape looks wonderful. Some of you will know that I sometimes get the privilege to be a Botanist on my two other days each week. This year there is a concerted effort going on to line up the classification of vegetation communities on the southern tablelands with the rest of the country, and that involves the ACT of course. We have, as did the alpine botanists, given local names to communities and now we need to line things up a little more carefully. It has afforded me the opportunity to visit and inspect in detail many of the wetland and swampy communities in our area. Just for the moment it all looks very healthy, but it may take some effort to keep it looking so good.



Ginini West Bog, December 2011

Your Results

Most sites appear to have good, clean water that meets expectations, even in built-up areas. Perhaps the good rains are flushing the system well. The report of bottle green tufts or cushions of algae at Whiskers Creek suggests that the healthy, and nitrogen fixing alga *Nostoc* is growing there. Continued low dissolved oxygen percentages and elevated phosphate levels in the bottom of Sullivans Ck at ANU is in contrast with the other Sullivans Ck reports. Just what the white stuff in the GPT at Flemington Pond is would be interesting to know. Thank you all very much!

Feral Fish

Most people think of European Carp or Plague Minnows when you mention Feral Fish! But there is rather more to the story than that. We have introduced all kinds of fish into Australia, either in the now quaint Victorian perception that native fish were dangerous or unpalatable or imperfect, or in various animal husbandry and biological control exercises.

Trout, like rabbits, foxes and deer, may provide great sport, but they are foreign and demand the aquatic communities change to suit them. Like the terrestrial ferals they put high demands on the native food animals (the mayflies, stoneflies and caddis they love, as larvae and as adults) so they change the dynamics of the food chains in aquatic systems. This usually works against the native higher order predators (fish, amphibians, reptiles and even platypus) and over time they leave the community.

Redfin are good eating. Schools of juvenile redfin are ravenous and gobble up whatever they encounter, especially other young (native) fish. They are also the carriers of a viral disease that may cause epidemics in native fish. Oriental weather loaches are similarly competitive, and are capable of outcompeting smaller native fish in areas where they occurs. They are omnivorous and can have the same effect on a river pool as over-stocking has on a paddock; all that is left is hardy and unpalatable, and may even be imported itself.

And then there are goldfish. They are not the pest other feral fish are, but they almost always have a human source! The trout fishermen would rather you didn't release your unwanted goldfish into their trout streams, as goldfish spread ulcers...well, well. Of more concern is just their presence in a place where they should not be! Don't release your unwanted goldfish into the drain or the local creek ... you wouldn't do this with a kitten or pup ... I hope!

This all came up as there was a recent report of goldfish well up the Molonglo, above the Hoskinstown Plain.

Calendar

January 21st and 22nd

January Waterwatch sampling Weekend

Thursday 2nd February

World Wetland Day

Events planned at ACT Urban Wetlands

Thank you all very much indeed for your on-going support across 2011. Have a happy, safe and restful festive season. I look forward to your support in 2012.

Best wishes,

Stephen Skinner

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