

September 2010 in Our Catchment

So far it has been a very gentle spring. There has been plenty of rain; the days have been mild, and the winds well behaved.

Your Results:

While Sullivans Creek continues to be rather dramatic in its water condition, many other parts of the catchment have once again shown very good water condition. It is very good to see so many reports of different kinds of animals active at your sites. Yarralumla Ck has elevated levels of nitrate...so have several other urban sites...could it be that this is the season for feeding gardens with 'blood-n-bone'? The alkaline pH in both Sullivans and Yarralumla Creeks may be associated with both the country rock and the nature of urban run-off; and the Electrical Conductivities, while still high are lower than during the drought! The water from the upper catchment all looks great! And a warm welcome to the ladies of the Lake.

QA/QC and your Calibration Fluids

Joining in the QA/QC evenings is important. We ask you to attend one every twelve months. They are ways of us giving you face to face feedback and support for all the good work you do. They are chances for you to meet the other like-minded people who do Waterwatch in your neighbourhood. They let you hone your skills; that's the reason for the test solutions. They are times when you can increase or upgrade your skills ... *have you got a Dissolved Oxygen kit, and does it work? ...have you got your head around the Conspicuous Algal abundance and form reporting?* They are times to get equipment and chemicals refreshed. They are, **very importantly**, times to get your calibration fluids replaced. The Electrical Conductivity calibration fluid lasts about **six months** before it becomes stale; the pH buffers last perhaps **twelve months** if you keep them cool and undisturbed! What's the date on your fluids? If you are using stale fluids the possibility is that the meters will gradually read less and less accurately and you will have more and more trouble calibrating them when you use them. So please try to attend one QA/QC event each year, and if you cannot get there make a very real effort to visit the office within weeks of the QA/QC, to replace your stale fluids.

Oh, and I forgot...the Territory, like all good public institutions, loves to count everyone it helps and supports...that's why we give you a Registration Card at the QA/QC or when you call by the office to discuss things. It makes them happy that their funds are being used properly...and we can incorporate your reports into DECCEW's water resources data bases. This can be important when the official monitoring system encounters a glitch!

Waterbirds at your sites

As spring approaches the banks of creeks and rivers come back to life. Grebes and swans parade their



new arrivals for all to see. The moorhens and coots mollycoddle their balls of steel wool in and out of the freshly greening reeds. The male wood ducks get very unsettled when anyone looks at their girl!

Do you have a family of grey fantails at your site? Have you come too close to the wineglass of hair and cobweb and been driven off by the

upset parents? Are the treecreepers back, and which one? Has your sacred kingfisher barked at you lately?

Like the frogs, the other vertebrate animals associated with a waterway can provide indications of local condition. If there is enough reed bed, your site may have a thriving population of swamp hens. There is something charming about these large birds with their red helmets and blue waistcoats. They indicate that your riverbank is doing well in terms of both plants and animals. Swamp hens are omnivores, and dig up tubers and rhizomes from aquatic and valley bottom plants, munch on aquatic and river bank insects, eat snails, tadpoles and frogs, and the occasional egg or chick. Those feet work as hands, as swamp hens dissect their food and eat with remarkable gentility. They form co-operatives, are polyandrous and have one or two broods a year.



If Little Pied Cormorants are regular visitors, your site has a healthy population of yabbies and freshwater shrimp! In the inland they tend to be solitary, patrolling their own reach, with favourite roosts and pools. They spend plenty of time in trees overhanging the water edge, but are also good at cruising the water of a reach. They dive effortlessly and stay down for quite some time, coming up well away from where they went in.

So, when you see the life in your site, please tell us about it. That is very much what the *comments* part in the data input is for. The more natural history we can compile about our subcatchments the better the planning of protection and restoration can be.

Calendar

Please read the latest Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch Newsletter at www.act.waterwatch.org.au/Files/Newsletters/october2010.pdf (warning: 3.45MB)

16 th and 17 th October	Water Sampling weekend, for MCG	Your sites	You can do your Bugwatch at this time too.
21 st October	QA/QC	Bredbo Pizzeria, 5:30–7:30 pm, with pizza	
4 th November	QA/QC	Lions Youth Haven, Kambah, 5:30–7:30 pm with sausage sizzle	

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