



Waterwatch Fridge Door

(All programs are free and open to the public.)

QA/QC Training

13 November 10.00am-1.00pm
Molonglo Gorge Recreation Area, NSW

ACWA Advisory Group Workshops

December 5, 2011 1:30pm
Queanbeyan CMA Offices
11 Farrer Pl. Queanbeyan

December 7, 2011 6:00pm
Cooma Area (TBA)

Shocking CHI Results: Water Improves River Health!

It's true, proven beyond a shadow of a trout, rivers need water! While we would like to claim the credit for the vastly improved water quality in the region, the breaking of the Millennium Drought is probably the more likely reason.

Now there is a bit of water in the rivers and full dams are providing additional environmental flows, it's time to turn our attention to the areas that meet minimum water quality standards only. Is it an accident they overlay perfectly with regions of intense urban development? Could we humans be having an deleterious effect on rivers whose health is otherwise improving?

With these groundbreaking results in mind, Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch will be focusing its attention on urban non-point pollution sources over the coming year.

ACWA Update

The ACWA (Actions for Clean Water) project is advancing steadily, and the more community input the better. To this end, the Draft Prioritization Report will be going up on the Murrumbidgee CMA website from mid November, and a series of two workshops are being planned for December.

At this point the literature review, anecdotal information and spacial data all show the lower Bredbo and Numeralla Rivers to be at high risk for erosion, and thus potential contributors to turbidity in the Murrumbidgee River. Further, as suspected the Dry Plains, and Adaminaby regions also are emerging as secondary sources of sediment in the river.

The creation of the ACWA report will prioritize sites of current and potential concern in the southern reaches of the Murrumbidgee and assist in targeting sites for remediation work.

If you are on the advisory group, please attend these and comment actively! If you are not on the Advisory Group but feel you have a strong stake in erosion issues on the Monaro, please email Tanya Noakes to be added to the mailing list.





QA/QC Trainings

Spring is in the air, and with the last nips of winter, it's time to come out and train up.

Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch now has over 160 certified sites monitored by recently trained volunteers. These volunteers and the data they provide are the basis upon which all work and Waterwatch projects are built.

Have you attended a training session in the last year? If not, your site is falling off the map!

Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch is offering a refresher training on 13 November at the Molonglo Gorge Picnic Area .

Come in, get fresh solutions, test yourself and discuss any issues or concerns about equipment or techniques.

Meet other volunteers in your region over a snag from the barbie

A macroinvertebrate refresher training will start at 10.00am and quality control and assessment training will commence at 11.00 am

Please let your coordinator or Tanya Noakes know if you will be attending, so that we can minimize competition for sausage (meaty and vegetarian) resources.

Conservation Planning and Research Volunteer Fieldwork Schedule

Conservation Planning and Research staff will be undertaking a number of field based projects over the next 6 months. Many of these projects require more staff resources than CPR can provide and we can often offer the opportunity for staff from other government departments to get involved in interesting science.

By participating in the CPR projects you can learn more about scientific methods, vegetation identification and fauna conservation and survey, not to mention the experience of working in some of the most scenic parts of the ACT.

Some of the volunteer positions don't require any specific skills however a current first aid certificate and experience in driving a 4 wd is helpful. The exact dates of fieldwork need to



Eastern Pygmy Possum
Photo by Mark Jakobsons

be arranged with the senior officer in charge of the project prior to the work commencing.

While CPR offers a wide variety of volunteer opportunities, including vegetation community typing, monitoring prescribed burns, kangaroo grazing monitoring, counting threatened plants, bandicoot, and broad-tooth rat surveys and earless lizard monitoring, we have only highlighted aquatic activities below.

If you would like to participate in any of these projects please call Greg Baines on 6207 2116. He will put you in contact with the relevant Senior Officer so that you can get more details.

November 2011-January 2012

Urban recreational lakes fishery survey
Molonglo bathymetry survey
Macquarie perch Survey

February 2012

Blackfish Monitoring

March 2012

Trout Cod monitoring and Murrumbidgee Monitoring

April 2012

Burra Creek and Queanbeyan River fish assessment
Trout Cod monitoring and Murrumbidgee Monitoring

News from the Cooma Region

Community Effort Improving Numeralla River

by Antia Brademann



Bank stabilisation and revegetation on the Numeralla River in the Murrumbidgee catchment is underway to arrest soil

erosion and lead to improved water quality, river health and native fish habitat.

Two sites were identified as point sources for sediment input. At one site, rock armouring was used to improve earlier erosion control

The other site benefited from the construction of 'cribs' and 'pin sets', both of which have been designed to stabilise the eroding river bank. This site was also revegetated with native plants.

The Numeralla River In-Stream Project has been a community based effort, involving Landcare, local landholders, the Murrumbidgee CMA, the Land and Property Management Authority, NSW Department of Primary Industries, Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch and Cooma-Monaro Shire Council.

Murrumbidgee River Environmental Flow Release 2011

This is a special year for the upper Murrumbidgee River, which, will receive an environmental flow of 43GL during October/November. Although this flow is much smaller than that released into the Snowy River just a week before, it is significant for the upper Murrumbidgee River as it is nearly twice its maximum yearly allocation as assigned under the Snowy Water License. The release has been designed to have two main effects; the first larger flow is aiming to rehabilitate the channel, while the second smaller flow is to encourage the spawning of Macquarie perch (*Macquaria australasica*).

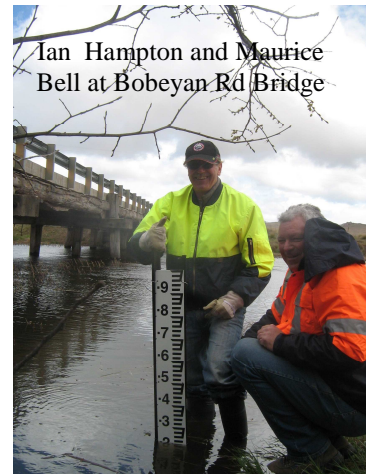
In a collaborative partnership between ActewAGL, NOW, Cooma Region Waterwatch, Murrumbidgee CMA and community volunteers, much effort is being put into monitoring this event including sampling water quality and marking the levels achieved by the flows at various stages of the release.

"The information that will result will be of interest to all the partners involved and will ultimately lead to a better understanding of the river and how environmental flows can benefit water quality and the ecology of the river." said

Antia Brademann, Cooma Region Waterwatch Coordinator.

"Through a collaborative effort, it has also been possible to gather much more data than would have been possible by any one of the organizations involved on their own, which has been great" she added.

It is indeed an opportune time to study the river in this way, as the higher rainfall received in the past two years has allowed this release to happen. Given that there is still more to learn about how releases might affect the upper Murrumbidgee River, gathering this information now, when there is more water about, makes sense and will contribute to fine tuning in the future.





Frogwatch Beyond Halloween

By Stephen Skinner



Interest in your local frogs need not end on Halloween when the Spring Frogwatching officially ends. You can still report on frogspawn and tadpoles. Tadpoles can be very difficult to identify, especially without close capture.

A few pointers on frogs' eggs:-

The Kings of the Riverbank (*Limnodynastes* spp.) frequently form free-floating foam rafts of frogspawn. *L. tasmaniensis* (the Spotted Marsh Frog) may spawn every two or three weeks across her season, so you may find fresh small rafts (around 5 cm across) on several visits [these are in the overflow of the lower dam on Barracks Creek]. Pobblebonk rafts are large, between 12 and 18 cm across, according to Lintermans, M & Osborne, W (2002) *Wet & Wild* Environment ACT, Canberra. The foam rafts of *Limnodynastes* are designed to maximise the numbers of tadpoles that hatch, but apparently there is a leech (*Bassianobdella* sp.) that can break in and eat Spotted Marsh Frog eggs (anon.(2005) *Australian Frogs* Penguin mini, Melbourne). Burrowing Frogs (*Neobatrachus* spp.) lay non-foamy large masses of eggs.

The Tree-frogs (*Litoria* spp.) lay their small clumps of spawn attached to emergent

vegetation without any foam. Ewing's Tree-frog is reported to lay several times a year and on each occasion may lay up to 15 clumps per square metre of water surface (Tyler, MJ (1978) *Amphibians of South Australia* Handbooks Committee, Adelaide), and related Maniacal Cackling Frog and Whistling Tree-frog may do likewise. The Green and Golden Bell Frog on the other hand lays dinner plate sized egg masses that are quite quick to sink.

The Froglets (*Crinia* spp.) may lay eggs near vegetation in the shallows or hidden by pebbles and small snags.

There are usually very few eggs at any one clump, and again no foam.

The Orange Groined or Smooth Toadlet (*Uperoleia laevigata*) attach their eggs singly or in twos or threes along submerged aquatic vegetation. They have a narrow halo of jelly in comparison to the *Crinia* eggs.

If you find frogspawn in wet marshy ground in summer or autumn it may well belong to Bibron's Toadlet (*Pseudophryne bibronii*) a small species no longer commonly encountered here.

Native tadpoles are rather variable in size, form and things like colour and eye position. Pobblebonk tadpoles are large, light brown in colour and have numerous pale blotches on the tail. Striped marsh frog tadpoles are dark in colour and graze actively. If you see striped tadpoles that are active but 'diveldiveldivel!' when they notice you there is a good chance they are the tadpoles of Maniacal Cackling Frogs.

Collect your daytime observations, and keep listening for calls, and send it all in to ACT Frogwatch. Include the site code where the observations were made, the date, and the weather, and your contact details.



When and Where for a Leaky Weir

By Charlie Carruthers

With the installation of leaky weirs at Scottsdale, I thought the subject deserved a bit of further examination and discussion. While leaky weir structures may be a useful method to control erosion in some locations, they are not a one size fits all solution, and have only limited application. In areas such as Scottsdale, where dry un-named erosion gullies are actively working across a landscape, they can very effectively slow water, encourage the infiltration of surface water to recharge ground water systems, and limit the amounts of sediment that reaches named waterways.

However used inappropriately, they can also have adverse impacts on fish passage.

In considering the efficacy of a leaky weir, keep in mind that in both NSW and the ACT the construction of weirs, leaky or otherwise, road crossings etc. on a water body require a permit. In most instances, the bed of waterways are owned by the Crown and as such, approval may also be required from NSW Land and Property Information (formerly Land and Property Management

Authority).

I certainly celebrate and support activities that improve riverine health and water quality. In the event that erosion (such as a head cut in a stream) needs to be controlled and a weir is out of the question due to fish passage requirements, other engineering options may be explored.

Leaky weir at Scottsdale. Note that it has been placed appropriately on a dry, erosion gully, and thus is not a barrier to fish passage



Platypus Page

Platypus Death Highlights Need for Anglers to Show Care

Queanbeyan City Council's Group Manager of Sustainability and Better Living, Mr Mike Thompson, said the recent death of a female platypus in the Queanbeyan River highlights the need for anglers to take care when fishing in local waterways.

"The platypus died as a result of fishing line being wrapped around its neck," Mr Thompson said. "Discarded fishing line is a major threat to platypus as they do not use their eyes in the water but the sensors on their bills for foraging. Line tends to wrap around their bills or neck which stops them from eating and affects their breathing. The line may also catch on snags or other objects, tightening around its body and either trapping the animal underwater where it drowns or causing it to die from exhaustion.

"People who fish along the river need to be diligent in recovering their snagged line and avoid using unattended set lines and nets.

"The discovery of a dead platypus is distressing to those involved and to the general community who value the fact that there are platypus in our River and want to see them continue to thrive and live in the area."

The death of this platypus comes as Council considers its new Draft Plan of Management for the Queanbeyan River and Platypus Awareness and Conservation Strategy.

"The Strategy identifies many things that the community can do to improve the habitat and survival chances for platypus in our urban environment," Mr Thompson said.

"The Draft Report will be considered by Council in the coming weeks and if endorsed will be placed on public exhibition for comment.

"Queanbeyan is fortunate to have a partnership with the Australian

Platypus Conservancy (APC) and Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch who both have official monitoring platypus sighting programs. Residents are encouraged to report sighting to either of these organisations or to Council itself."

Dr Melody Serena of the APC said, "Unfortunately, we know of many cases where a platypus has died as a result of becoming entangled in fishing line. This death is particularly tragic given that the animal was a female and any babies produced by her this spring are now doomed to die of starvation.

"To avoid these sorts of incidents, it's really important that anglers make it their habit to retrieve any lengths of line that get snagged in the water. Also, if they do happen to see a platypus while angling, the best thing to do is to stop fishing for a few minutes until the platypus has moved away so it doesn't get accidentally hooked."

For further information contact Council's Sustainability and Better Living Group on 6285 6574 or Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch by emailing tanya.rucoskynoakes@act.gov.au



Dead platypus entangled in fishing line at the Chaffey Dam near Tamworth. Photo - Matt Ryan

Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch

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What is Waterwatch?

Waterwatch is a national community water quality monitoring program that encourages all Australians to become involved and active in the protection and management of their waterways and catchments.

Who is Waterwatch?

Waterwatch involves local community groups such as Landcare, Park Care and Catchment groups, as well as residents, schools and landowners who regularly monitor the water quality of local creeks, wetlands, lakes and rivers.

Why monitor?

Healthy catchments produce healthy ecosystems with happy fish, frogs, birds, plants, macro-invertebrates and people. Waterwatch aims to create awareness of water quality issues by involving all members of the community and by forming partnerships between the Waterwatch group and water authorities, resources management authorities, business and industry.

First step

If you are interested in improving the health of your waterway and meeting or forming a group of like-minded individuals, you should begin by contacting your local Waterwatch Coordinator.

Making a difference

Water quality information collected throughout a catchment provides a picture of the health of your waterways. Waterwatch groups have initiated many positive, community based conservation activities such as creek restoration, willow removal, removing litter from waterways, eradicating weeds, development of habitats, and reducing the use of pesticides and other pollutants.

Waterwatch is proudly supported by:



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Volunteers work for free
but not for nothing!
Our Vision—
Healthy Waterways

ActewAGL



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