

August in our Catchment

We really have had a good winter for the waterways. Now all the elms have started to pink up for spring, and many of the wattles are full of bud. The prickly Moses wattle has its pale yellow balls out already. The January–June 2010 Catchment Health Indicators Report to which all of you contributed is now able to be seen on the Molonglo Catchment website at www.molonglocatchment.com.au/news_&_events.htm#M-CHiP_6_-Monthly_Report_January_-_June_2010 and I'd be very happy to have feedback.

As a *thank you* for all your efforts Tanya has provided a knapsack/backpack for every one of you! They are made from recycled material, and will hold most of your kit if you want them to, or make a useful bushwalking pack. Please come into the office and claim yours! And we've still got MCG canvas hats for those of you that want one.

Your Results

As would be expected, almost all the flows were 'medium' or better. Several people noted that the EC readings were markedly lower than has been the norm over the drought. Now that the soil moisture level has settled, most of what you are measuring is rain, and so has little opportunity to pick up too many ions. One slightly odd result has been the percent saturation of dissolved Oxygen in rapidly flowing but cold water. Many reports were of between 80–100%. This is actually what is predicted, as a dynamic equilibrium is established in the moving water at water temperatures close to air temperatures.

Sullivan's Ck has done it again, providing a good example of erosion induced nutrient elevation around EPIC, but with remarkably low phosphate levels at ANU. Phosphate is in such high demand in our systems that it is usually grabbed by any bacterium, alga or water plant root that notices it before it gets away. So free phosphate means that the gullies in the paddocks above the Barton Highway probably have saturated walls and the erosion nick-points are moving for the first time in years. This very situation was predicted by the Natural Resource Management students from ANU when they did their survey in May. They made quite a point of reporting that the open paddocks with unfenced waterlines and no attempt at appropriate revegetation above the Highway were very vulnerable to continuing erosion. The low phosphate levels at the ANU point once again to the likely source of free phosphate at that end of the creek being fertilizer on lawns, gardens and playing fields.

Frogs and Floods

Frogs are a lot cannier than we often give them credit for. There are few of our local frogs that are confined to the water. As long as they can keep their skin moist they are happy on dry land. They are also good weather forecasters — they exploit overcast, grey days to explore their environs, travelling



between soak and spring to see what's there. Pobblebonks take a delight in burying themselves in compost heaps and other large accumulations of loose plant matter. The two grass frogs are great at using well developed tussocks, postholes with rotten posts, crumbling stumps and fallen timber as prime real estate. The tree frogs will not only slip behind bark and into the nooks and crannies of living timber, but will happily exploit that sheet of corrugated iron up against your back fence, the old tire near the shed or the bricks round the side of the house with the ivy over them. The spotted grass frog still with its tail in the picture was under bark on a log ... well

above the waterline. The tiny froglets, and they are very small, they can comfortably sit on a 10 cent coin, travel out into the wilds of the riverbank and will shelter under any convenient old flat thing with soil under it. Frogs are wanderers. So don't worry too much about them in storms and downpours — they are probably cosy and safe well above the flood they knew better than you was likely to happen. And that goes for the yabbies too!

Calendar

Macroinvertebrates: this can be done any time between September and November. Drop in and borrow a net a tray and a couple of guides, and have fun doing your site. We really would like many more sites done this spring, to give more body to the six monthly M-CHiP report.

Frogwatch: there will be an **Introductory Frogwatch Training** evening in Queanbeyan this year. It will be conducted by Emma Keightley and Dave Hunter. The proposed date is **Wednesday 15th September**, starting at 6:00pm at the Queanbeyan Public School in Isabella St and later in Glebe Park along the weir. There will be a local advanced session too, in October. Frogwatch Census Week is the 17th to 23rd October this year. It promises to be a great year for frogs and we would be very happy to have Frogwatching catchment wide! Registration details will be on our website shortly.

The National Threatened Species Day walk is at Mulligans Flat, on Sunday 5th September. If you would like to go ring 6207 2113; there is a limit of 40 people. This being spring there are many other walks on, all over the region. Landcare week is 6th to 13th September. Check the website for further information.

The next **sampling weekend** is the 18th and 19th September. If you need kits, batteries, calibration fluid or anything else let me know well beforehand and we can arrange pick-up or delivery.

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