

June in our Catchment

Well, we are still really short of rain, but some of the waterways are more or less back in operation, and some aren't! As is to be expected when the water is just trickling through the Electrical Conductivity and the pH readings are distinctly different from periods of high flow.

There was a good demonstration of local effects on chemical data last week when I was with the Yr 5/6 pupils at Bungendore PS. In the Elmslea Ponds there are beds of spikerush and a carpet of stoneworts. I collected water and water-bugs from both these communities and let the children do the measurements and hunt the bugs. It was quite a shock to find that the water in the reedbeds was around pH 6.5 and that above the stonecrop was nearer 8! Then I thought about the stoneworts collecting the lime in the water and holding it on their cell surfaces...and how that process would push the pH towards the alkaline side, while the rotting of the spikerush at this time of the year would increase the acid in the reedbeds.

We have data in from all three groups on Sullivan's Ck this time and it demonstrates that, even when the engineering is changed, constructed wetlands can work well for watercourse health. The pH readings for Mitchell and Lyneham were very alkaline, while those for the three university sites were almost acid; the electrical conductivity followed a similar pattern, a little elevated in the creek and the drain, and then well within standard before going into Lake Burley Griffin.

Work is continuing in riparian reparation throughout the catchment. The work at Molonglo River Park is good to hear about; work in the Queanbeyan is progressing well, and things are beginning to happen at various points along the Pialligo and Fyshwick foreshores. Let us hope that the flurry of activity at the base of Scrivener Dam is the harbinger of appropriate things to follow in the lower Molonglo.



Figure 1 A gentle reminder of what we are working to save, and some of the threats.

Please keep those back sets of data coming in if you have any. We'd like to make this the most up-to-date six monthly Report for some time.

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