

Your Molonglo Catchment

December 2011

Newsletter of the Molonglo Catchment Group

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Look out Rabbits *by Andy Westcott*

Following on from the success of the Royalla and Carwoola Landcare Groups' Rabbit control projects, the MCG applied for a Community Action Grant to extend the scope of the project. The application proposed an expansion of the program to also include Burra Landcare, Fernleigh Park Landcare, Captains Flat Landcare along with Royalla and Carwoola in a second round of rabbit control and community education on harbour destruction and other follow up control techniques.



The Molonglo Catchment Pest Animal Information Pack will be distributed to all participants in the Community Action Grant project.

We recently received news from the member for Eden-Monaro, Mike Kelly, that the application was successful. In the region impacts of over-grazing by rabbits are resulting in reduced biodiversity, loss of native groundcovers, reduced productivity, weed invasion and soil exposure resulting in erosion. Utilising lessons from the previous projects run so successfully by Carwoola and Royalla Landcare we will increase community awareness of the impact of the rabbits, provide community training in techniques to control outbreaks, reduce the rabbit population by broadcasting carrots dosed with calicivirus and educate land owners of the follow-up work required to keep numbers down (such as harbour destruction).

The project will involve 3 workshops held in conjunction with the Livestock Health and Pest Authority on appropriate rabbit control techniques, participants will be provided with a copy of the Molonglo Catchment Group's Pest Animal Information Pack, engagement of 120-140 landholders in a rabbit control program with a strong preference given to landholders who are collaborating with their neighbours and who can demonstrate a commitment to follow up control. A monitoring component will also be included to gauge the success of the program and also to understand barriers faced by land holders when attempting to carry out the necessary follow up control methods.

Sustainable Farming in the Majura Valley

By Andy Westcott

The Molonglo Catchment Group (MCG) and Rural Landholders Association have been working on a project titled Sustainable Farming in the Majura Valley that was funded by the Australian Government through its Community Action Grant program. The catalyst for the project was the proposed Majura Parkway and ACT Government's Eastern Broadacre Study that outlined the future vision for the valley. The project aimed to develop support for and provide information on sustainable land management practices to



Sherry McArdle-English facilitates the field day.

landholders in the Majura Valley and to find out their vision for the Valley. In the first stage of the project, Sherry McArdle-English, a farmer in Majura Valley and a member of the Rural Landholders Association (RLA) and Andy Westcott, MCG Coordinator, met with each land holder individually to hear what they thought about the future of the valley. These interviews were compiled by Rosemary Purdie who then wrote the Sustainable Farming in the Majura Valley report. The report highlighted landholder frustration over short term leases which made it difficult to invest in sustainable land management practices. It also highlighted a shared vision for the valley. This vision was to see the valley retain its rural aesthetics and be a true rural gateway to the Bush Capital. Four steps were recommended as a starting point to help realise the landholders' vision for the valley:

Step 1. Resolve the lease uncertainty.

Step 2. Address the potential adverse impacts of the Majura Parkway.

Step 3. Revisit the Eastern Broadacre study and include more rural land uses.

Step 4. Work with landholders to support their landcare activities.

Under these four steps sat 9 recommendations. For more information on these contact Andy Westcott at the MCG. The report has been well received and landholders are working as we speak to ensure the report's recommendations are implemented. I am happy to report that the landholders in the valley have come together to form the Majura Valley Landcare group. They have their first projects planned involving a riparian revegetation project and shelter belt planting, with both getting under way in early autumn 2012. I would like to make special note of the tireless work of Sherry McArdle-English in ensuring this project was a success and her continued efforts to push for the recommendations be taken up by Government. As noted earlier the project was assisted by an Australian Government Community Action Grant, and it certainly lived up to that name with the Majura Valley community coming together to ensure they had a voice in the development of an area so special to all of them. More information: Ph: 6299 2119

Carwoola Field Days

By Lynton Bond and Andy Westcott

The Carwoola Landcare group run two fantastic and very popular field days each year. These days are focused on very different types of flora, one is on native wildflowers and the other is on weeds!

This year, Thirteen people came on the Wildflower Walk on 30 October at “Bunduluk” (previously known as “Ozark”), the 280 ac property adjacent to “Banjo”. The vegetation on the property forms a critical link in the regional connectivity along the river corridor, and the new owners are keen to learn about the natural values of their land. The vegetation is variable with some excellent sections of native vegetation. Carwoola Landcare have uploaded a few images to their new Flickr website

(www.flickr.com/photos/carwoola_landcare).



An area of hoary sunray (*Leucochrysum albicans*): A large clearing alive with hoary sunray brings the wildflower walkers to a halt as they absorb the stunning scene.



Weed Field Day, November 2011: Learning about identifying and controlling weeds with Palerang Council Weed Officers, Neville Plumb and Michael Pearce.

There was also a great turn-out at the Weed Field Day on 20 November: 18 people heard from Palerang Council’s Weeds Officers, Neville Plumb and Michael Pearce, who provided heaps of information about identifying and controlling weeds and the process involved in inspections. There are also a couple of images from the day on the Flickr website. Of particular concern this year is serrated tussock, St Johns wort and blackberry but that’s not to say you can ignore African Love Grass, sweet briar, or broom. It pays to control weeds (and manage the reasons for the infestation) when they first appear.

If you would like more information or to join the Carwoola Landcare Group email list for discussion and notification of Landcare events send an email to landcare-request@carwoola.org.au with the subject “subscribe” (without the quotes).

Water = Life?

Eighth “Along the Molonglo” Art Exhibition

By Lynton Bond and Alan Jones

Since 2005, the “Along the Molonglo” Art Exhibition has been a collaborative venture between the Molonglo Catchment Group (MCG) and the Artists Society of Canberra (ASOC).

The theme for the 2012 exhibition has been announced as *Water = Life?* In essence it draws on the link between water and life within and beside streams/wetlands; human activities and emotions relating to rivers, lakes and ponds; and the positive and negative impacts of drought, occasional flooding and human intervention in the form of innovations. The question mark reflects the evolution of ecosystems in our catchment.

For the first time in its 8 year history the exhibition will be a stand alone event. The MCG are very excited about this and are working closely with ASOC to ensure a successful event. The Exhibition will be held at the CSIRO Discovery Centre, opening to the public at 10.00 am on Tuesday April 24 with the official opening ceremony at 6.30 pm. Thereafter, public access will be daily from 10.00 am to 5.00 pm on Wednesday to Friday, and 11.00 am to 3.00 pm on Saturday and Sunday – closing Sunday April 29.



Sandra House and her 2011 Along the Molonglo winning entry, "Molonglo Grassland Triptych"



Opening the Along the Molonglo back in 2007

Prizes for the best-judged entries have been generously donated:

- 1st Prize - \$2000 by the ACTEW Corporation
- 2nd Prize - \$500 by the Molonglo Catchment Group
- 3rd Prize - \$200 Gift Voucher by Pepe's Paperie, Philip

For more information see the [Along the Molonglo page](#) and visit website at the Artists Society of Canberra: www.asoc.net.au

Feral Fish

By Dr Stephen Skinner

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.



The distinctive Redfin Perch. E Beaton ACT government

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 when there was a recent report of goldfish well up the Molonglo, above the Hoskinstown Plain.

Coordinator's Report

By *Andy Westcott*

It has been too long between newsletters thanks to a busy schedule and quite a bit of time off for yours truly over the last few months. There has certainly been plenty happening though. The group has begun rolling out the Community Based Biodiversity Monitoring project which has been well received. Groups across the ACT are in the first round of training in the use of the monitoring manual, planning their monitoring program and, in the near future, will be getting out there and doing the monitoring. The aim of the project is to give the groups a means of monitoring the changes to their patch as a result of their work. This will have to broader result of helping us get a picture of the health of the catchment as a whole.



Floriade 2011, one of the 4 Waterwatch presentations

Our NSW Environment Trust project to run more Managing Horses on Small Properties with Jane Myers field days is also underway. The first few sessions have attracted a good crowd and encouragingly a lot of the participants had just purchased properties and came along to ensure they set them up appropriately. We provided a survey to all participants to get feedback on what they were doing on their properties currently, their understanding of various land management principles and their willingness to adopt new practices. On completion of the project we will again survey the participants to identify any changes in knowledge and hopefully see some altered land management practices.



The winners from the ACT Landcare awards.

In September the ACT Landcare awards were held and I would like to say a big congratulations to the Friends of Mount Majura, Mount Ainslie Weeders and Watson Woodland Working Group who took out the Urban Landcare award for their terrific partnership, Leanne Barrett who took out the Quiet Achiever Award and Sherry McArdle-English who won the Primary Producer award.

With help from the MCG Committee, Waterwatch and Frogwatch we ran a very popular display at Floriade again this year. We were lucky enough to be displaying on a Canberra Day so had plenty of locals asking lots of great questions about the catchment, we also met plenty of Landcarers from all over the country who came over to share stories about their patch. The picture in the top right shows our display which included our 3D catchment model and samples of water from a handful of our Waterwatch sites, this was very popular with the crowd with the pH of Sullivan's Creek regularly drawing gasps!

That wraps up another 'Your Molonglo Catchment', if you have any stories about events you have held please feel free to contact me and I will do my best to get them in the next edition.

Support

For more details on events being run in the Molonglo catchment visit www.molonglocatchment.org.au. If you have any questions about events or want to discuss NRM in the catchment please feel free to call me on 6299 2119, email me at coordinator@molonglocatchment.org.au or drop into the office at Unit 13, Cassidy Arcade 72-76 Monaro Street, Queanbeyan between 8am and 4:30pm.

The operation of the Molonglo Catchment Group is supported through the Australian Government's Caring for our Country initiative with the support of the ACT Natural Resource Management Council.

