

Your Molonglo Catchment

November 2010

Newsletter of the Molonglo Catchment Group

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An Evening's Frogwatching along the Queanbeyan *by Stephen Skinner*

We have now had three Frogwatch events in Queanbeyan this year. The Frog Call evening in mid winter was well attended with participants from Gundaroo, Bungendore and even Braidwood! In September there was an introductory session for this year's Frogwatch at Queanbeyan Public School, but, when we went to the swing bridge and down to Glebe Park the frogs had taken the evening off. Last night was very different!

We gathered in the sunset at Doeberl Reserve on Barracks Flat Pl. There were people from Queanbeyan, and others from the Kowen Forest area, the Carwoola area and Captains Flat. Emma Keightley came with equipment and materials – Dave Hunter brought his expertise. After a light supper to the chorus of the amorous moor hens, and the reed warblers, we set off along the river path.



We didn't have to go far. Common Eastern Froglets (*Crinia signifera*) were clicking and squeaking happily along the river margins and every now and then we could hear the 'bonk' of a Banjo Frog (*Limnodynastes dumerillii*). For quite a while they had to work hard to out-compete the reed warblers, who, as usual, assumed we had come to hear them. The further we went round the bend, and the deeper the evening light settled over us, the frog calls became louder, more numerous and more insistent. Dave Hunter found a Banjo Frog by his call, but he was well down in a crevice. He had more luck with the Froglets at the reed-bed downstream from the cliff. We all got to see the froglet at close range! It was here that Emma and Dave pointed out the alarm calls of the Froglets and explained that it could be confused with other frog's mating calls. We also got to hear the toy machine-gun call of the Spotted Grass Frog (*Limnodynastes tasmaniensis*). Walking back to the cars, under the newish moon in Scorpio, people began to hear the throaty 'wvhhrrrk' of the Smooth or Orange Groined Toadlet (*Uperoleia laevis*). We would hear more of these at the second stop!

We drove out to the gates of Weetalabah Estate, where there is a large, shallow stormwater retention dam. The chorus that greeted us was quite different to the river frogs. This time there were both Common Froglets and Plains Froglets (*Crinia parinsignifera*) with their high pitched 'rrekk', more Spotted Grass Frogs and Orange Groined Toadlets, as well as a small number of the Maniacal Cackling Frog (*Litoria peronii*). That descending cackle is too distinctive to miss! Again Dave captured a Spotted Grass Frog and showed us that it was twice the size of the froglets, and had much more colour and markings. The pond was alive with backswimmers, damsel nymphs and other life, and there were one or two rafts of frog's eggs in the shallows. What a wonderful way to spend a balmy evening!

[Listen to recordings of these frog species in a PlaceStory at www.molonglocatchment.com.au/frog_calls_PlaceStories.htm]

Kosciuszko2Coast Biodiversity and Farming Fair, Sunday 10th October

by *Stephen Skinner*

Bredbo put on a fine mountain day for us, long periods of cloud with great patches of sunshine, light breezes and no real rain! We set up our two tents, then set off to help Antje Brademann setting up for the first time. Then she was moved, but she did have a wonderful selection of water bugs.

The crowd was happy and interested. We had whole families to listen to the books. Everyone wanted to see the monsters in their drinking water! Weed packs and Pest Animal Packs were good business. Horse care books and talks about keeping horses were hot topics. We even sold some postcards and copies of the stories. It was great to meet old friends and new people!



Spring Wildflower Walk

By *Lynton Bond*



Wax-lipped orchid (*Glossodia major*)

shrubs, grasses and herbs, from the tiny twining fringe-lily (*Thysanotus patersonii*) to the scribbly gums (*Eucalyptus rossii*).

Those looking for orchids were initially somewhat frustrated by the season, with many orchids found but none in flower, but when the first cluster of *Glossodia* wax-lip orchids in full bloom was found, enthusiasm was renewed.

Meanwhile Martin Butterfield, local member of Canberra Ornithologists Group tried to offer a commentary on the birds, but the wind seemed to be keeping many of them out of sight and out of ear-shot. Nonetheless, Martin recorded 17 birds on the walk. On returning to the house, the group was treated to pumpkin soup, tea, coffee and cakes and, of course, more opportunity to catch up on the latest goings-on. Many declared an interest to return shortly to check out those elusive orchids

Tree Planting on Burra Road 24 October 2010

By Peter Duffy

On Sunday, 10 members of Burra Landcare spent a pleasant morning planting 70 tubestock Eucalypts along a re-aligned and widened portion of Burra Road leading into the Burra Valley. As reported previously, Palerang Council removed many mature Eucalypts along the new section of road, but kindly provided us with tubestock for long term tree replacement. Council's OH&S officer, Lorrae Stokes, briefed us with safety information, and provided safety jackets and signs, helping to ensure that nothing went wrong on the morning.



Reading the Landscape with David Tongway, 18 September

By Andy Westcott



The Molonglo Catchment Group and Burra Landcare combined forces recently to run a Reading the Landscape field day with David Tongway as part of our Sustainability on Small Farms project. We gathered at Peter Duffy and Kath Boyd's property on Badgery Road to take a walk around and visit 5 sites of interest identified by David.

We started off by looking at erosion at two sites and in particular the dangers of exposing the B horizon (the layer of soil under your top soil which is known as the A horizon) by undertaking a simple test of dropping a piece of dried soil into water to observe how easily it disperses. The test showed that the A horizon held itself together very well when dropped in the water, the B horizon sample dispersed almost immediately on impact with the water. The message from David was that once that B horizon is exposed your soil becomes prone to various forms of erosion. David went on to discuss the need to establish vegetation over exposed soil but to also lay woody debris across high flow areas to disperse surface water and to catch eroding soil while your groundcover regenerates. We continued the walk around the property looking at the need to have some grazing of improved pastures to aid the breakdown of organic matter and also the roles of lichen in the environment. A big thank you to David for donating his time and to Peter Duffy and Kath Boyd for opening up their property for the event.

Restoring Disturbed Landscapes

If you are interested in David's work keep an eye out for his new book with John Ludwig called "Restoring Disturbed Landscapes", the book retails for \$49.95, however if you order it online now from www.newsouthbooks.com.au/isbn/9781597265812specd.htm you will receive a 20% discount. Also keep an eye on our website as we hope to run more field days with David soon.

Coordinator's Report

By Andy Westcott

Over the last three months the MCG has been busy with numerous field days and workshops along with preparing volunteer planting days with Royalla and Captains Flat Landcare. We spent a week at Floriade in the ActewAGL "Look 'n' Learn" marquee displaying our 3D catchment model along with water samples from many of our Waterwatch sites. We spoke with people from all over the Molonglo catchment and quite a few interstate and international visitors also. All were keen to learn what the variations in water quality were telling us and what the overall health of the catchment was like.



Our Sustainability on Small Farms project assisted by the Australian Government's Caring for Our Country is beginning to wrap up with the last of the field days to be run over the coming months and almost all of the on-ground money committed to great projects. We will be closing the project out with three workshops over the next month; two of these will be field days on how to manage horses on small properties, with a focus on ensuring you get the design of the property right before introducing your horses. The field days will be presented by Jane Myers from equiculture, who was with us earlier in the year for two very successful seminars on the same topic, this time we get to see her in the field demonstrating her theories in practice. The first session will be held on Sunday 7th November in Bungendore followed by Saturday 27th November in Burra. Both are filling up quickly so call me on 6299 2119 now to book your place.

We are also running training in the use of the new "Vegetation Monitoring Manual, A Step-by-Step Guide to Monitoring Native Vegetation in the ACT" by Sarah Sharp and Lori Gould. The manual has been developed to provide a consistent approach to monitoring and surveying vegetation, habitat and environmental condition. Participants will be given instruction material, a set of recording sheets and a CD containing a copy of the manual. Morning tea and lunch will be provided. The field day will be presented by Sarah Sharp in Carwoola on Sunday 7th November, spaces are still available so if you wish to attend email Sarah on sarahsharp@grapevine.net.au with your name, email address, and the name of the group you represent if applicable.

The Community Action Grant project "Sustainable Farming in the Majura Valley" is progressing well, Sherry McArdle-English and I have been visiting land holders in the valley to discuss their current land management practices, what they would like to do in the future on their property, how their lease agreements are impacting on their ability to manage their land and what impacts the proposed Majura Parkway along with the Eastern Broadacre study are having on their plans for the future. We will be holding workshops in the valley with the help of the soon to be appointed Regional Landcare Facilitator in the coming months.

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