

August 2011 in our Catchment

The few days of rain last week were most welcome. The plants, running on their day-length clock are sure spring has begun, and the bush is awash with colour again. The magpies are active and the king parrots are still going to be about for a week or two.

Your Results

There was plenty of water about. One of the little ponds in Watson had water for the first time in months. The dam at the top of Woolshed Creek was very full, while the water there was surprisingly warm; lower down, at the intersections, the Electrical Conductivity was much higher than usual, and for the second month. Other high mineral contents were reported from Stony Creek but most sites that show high EC were down this time because of dilution with rain and higher flow rates. Sullivans Ck at the Flemington Ponds was quite turbid, as was Burra Ck where they have been working on the pipeline outlet. Even with the floods in Sullivans Ck the percent saturation of dissolved Oxygen was still poor in the ANU grounds. There was some phosphate in the creeks feeding the Queanbeyan above Googong Dam.

Which Wattle?

Last time I wrote about riparian vegetation was in December. Now seems to be a very good time to bring up the subject again, and concentrate on the most conspicuous thing flowering now, the Wattle. Many wattles thrive in the well watered soils provided by river beds and creek lines but there are three species that can be called regularly riparian.



Silver wattle

grows best on the spurs of gorges along the Molonglo and the Murrumbidgee, at least from Pine Island south. With its hanging grey narrow phyllodes for leaves and tubular flowers (over the hot weather), it is hard to confuse. Here is a hardy weeping plant that might replace a willow,

The Silver Wattle (*Acacia dealbata*) is often the dominant shrub or small tree in Tablelands Riparian Shrubland. It flowers from August to October; the silver grey feathery leaves and greyish stems make it hard to confuse, except with the much shorter leaved Cootamundra Wattle (*A. baileyana*). *Acacia doratoxylon* or Currawang



Red-leg Wattle

perhaps. *Acacia rubida* (Red-leg Wattle where I come from!) is certainly not confined to riparian habitats, especially as a post-fire pioneer, but is often the principal shrub in eucalypt woodland communities just up the bank from the riparian zone. It has yellow to reddish branchlets and petioles, and often has a range of leaves from feathery true leaves to short red edged phyllodes.



Bark of *Acacia decurrens*

The other common feathery leaf wattles round here will grow close to water, but do well elsewhere. *A. decurrens* (Green Wattle) is probably a companion of



Leaf-tips of *A. mearnsii*, and mealybugs



Flowers of *A. mearnsii*

white settlement rather than a long term native. It has green feathery leaves, pronounced ridges from the leaves down the bark that persist and widen as the branches grow, and bright yellow flowers in August and September. This

species has been widely but mistakenly planted round wetlands and creek lines; it is much more appropriate on the south coast. *A. mearnsii* (Late Green Wattle) is local, and thrives on the edge of riparian systems, between the valley woodland and the sheoaks. It has dull green feathery leaves, hairy but pale branch tips and lemon yellow flowers in October to December. *A. parramattensis* (Green Wattle) is very like *A. mearnsii* but has bronze or golden hairy branch tips. It does well in the flood runners along the Queanbeyan and the Molonglo, but also grows in the nearby woodland.

High up in the catchment Blackwood (*A. melanoxylon*) or the hickories may be stream-side plants, especially in *Eucalyptus viminalis* woodlands.

So plant silver wattle and either of the green wattles in the lower river valley, Currawang on rocky points, and let the Blackwood be along the high country streams. Red-leg wattle

will let itself in, and so might Golden wattle (*A. pycnantha*) although it tends to prefer well drained soils. Avoid *A. decurrens*, and abhor *A. baileyana*!

Calendar

Macroinvertebrate Training:

28 th August 2011	Murrays Corner, Paddys River	2:00–4:00pm
25 th September 2011	1149 Captains Flat Rd	1:30–3:00pm

Sampling Day:

17 th –18 th September 2011	your sites	when convenient.
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Rapid Assessment of Riparian Condition:

17 th September 2011	Coppins Crossing,	10:30 am–2:30pm
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Frogwatch Training:

20 th September 2011	Queanbeyan Public School,	6:00–9:30pm
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Frogwatch Field Trip:

27 th September 2011	Queanbeyan Region	6:00–8:30pm
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QA/QC:

13 th November 2011	Molonglo Gorge Recreation Area	10:00am–1:00 pm
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The Macroinvertebrate day on 25th September will be especially for people in the area, but anyone is more than welcome. You don't have to be a Waterwatcher. We will meet at the Carwoola Hall and travel in convoy to the property, park off the Captains Flat Rd and walk down to the Molonglo. Afternoon Tea will be provided. In the event of inclement weather, I'll collect the samples (with a few brave helpers perhaps) and bring them to the hall.

Please remember that you do need to book with Anke Maria Hoefer (ACT Frogwatch Coordinator Frogwatch@ginninderralandcare.org.au) for the Frogwatch events, and both Tanya and I do like to know if you are going to come to the other events...it helps with catering and equipment.