

January 2012 in Our Catchment

Happy New Year, lunar and solar! It has been a rather up and down start to the year, with some bitter nights and the occasional summer day! In many ways it has been a gentle summer ... considering the day-length shift back to short days is almost upon us (5th or 6th February) ... and a wonderful one for many plants and animals. After the pillaging of my greengage by the sulphur crested vandals I have deep, dark thoughts of getting up a petition for their capture, caging and export! And then there is the St John's Wort!



Red & Blue Damsels laying eggs, Webbs Dam, Mt Clear area (L. Johnston)

Your Results

Most results were well within the usual range of readings for this time of year, even the dissolved oxygen readings don't look too bad. The electrical conductivity in the creeks above the Molonglo Gorge was elevated but not as high as it can be. The pH for the upper Queanbeyan was quite low, but may reflect the on-going run-off in that catchment.

Several of you have reported blanket weed, which worries me a little.

- Velvet moss (*Vaucheria* spp, a golden green conspicuous alga) is usually densely intertwined, springs back on compression and smells muddy or fishy. It's not uncommon in upland streams and where there may be a source of nitrogen.
- The silkweeds, *Spirogyra* and *Zygnema* mainly, are usually very slippery and tend to form a veil in the water rather than a blanket. They may range in colour from lemon-yellow to dark bottle-green, but they don't smell and they don't knot-up like the branched blanket-weeds. They are seasonal and flourish in sunny spots.
- The blanket-weeds are coarse to the touch, don't have much give and really do often smell of tomcat. They are perennial. They indicate not only lack of cover but also high phosphate levels.

All of these conspicuous algae may be around especially where you have unshaded waterways and snags or rocks for them to attach to. The blanket weeds become a real problem when they start to choke flow. If you are not sure what it is bring me a sample ... a pinch in gladwrap will do nicely ... and I'll let you know. In a season like this I'd be expecting plenty of silkweed!

More Frog News

I have done the sums and this spring was reasonably good for rural and country town frogs but city dwelling frogs are still not exactly flourishing! The short version is also with this newsletter; the long version, with the numbers, will be in the CHiP report.

There are a couple of summer calling frogs that people would like to know if they are actively about. Much of the time, especially since the fire, these have been passed over, but Dr Hunter and Dr Osborne would like to know if they are still here and where that might be.

The two frogs of interest are the Broad Palmed Frog (*Litoria latopalmata*), a tree frog that spends much time on the ground and Bibron's Toadlet (*Pseudophryne bibroni*), a small frog that may have disappeared from round here. The broad palmed frog makes a rising series of duck-like quacks, and calls on summer nights. It is supposed to be found in the Murrumbidgee and major tributaries. If you hear it, try to record it and let Anke Maria know at Frogwatch@ginninderralandcare.org.au . The Toadlet may still be around in the upper Jerrabomberra area or Carwoola ... listen for a lonely but sharp *ek* every now and then, over the top of the crickets and cicadas. Then it is the same story, let Anke Maria know, and the information will reach the people who want it.

Calendar and Notices

Thursday 2nd February World Wetland Day Dickson Wetland, Hackett

There is a bike ride from Banksia St across Lyneham and Dickson to Hackett. Food and things will start around 6:30pm. Like last year contact Edwina Robinson Edwina.Robinson@act.gov.au for details. There are also a number of other events around Canberra

18th/19th February your sites Water Quality Sampling

I have a good supply of LR44/A76 alkaline batteries. Please make arrangements to collect them or have them delivered; they are too expensive otherwise!