

## October 2011 in our Catchment

So far it has been quite a gentle spring. The King Parrots are still around in Queanbeyan and the change from the white heaths to the red and yellow egg-&-bacon peas has been gradual. And we have had some rain.

### Your Results

The results in so far indicate that our waterways are generally in good condition this month. Burra Creek is a little on the warm side near Williamsdale Road; there is some soil disturbance along Scabbing Flat Creek, and in Yandyguinula Creek at *Reschs Creek* gate; Stony Creek has elevated minerals, and some of the pH readings are edging up but things are otherwise good. Please keep having a go at reporting on the conspicuous algae ... some things, like the rafts of silk weed around now are very seasonal, and that is what we need data about.

### Frogwatch beyond Hallowe'en



This year the ACT Frogwatch Census runs from 16<sup>th</sup> to the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October, although you can still submit reports up to and including 31<sup>st</sup> October. Those of you that are involved are asked to remember that the second evening is really quite important. The weather will be different, and so some of the frogs may well be behaving differently. After all you want the best picture of your site! Also getting those results in quickly means they can be checked and entered soon after, and people like me will then be in a position to report back to you before Christmas.

The little bloke sparkling on Dave Hunter's blue fingers is a Common Eastern Froglet from the Queanbeyan R.

Interest in your local frogs need not end on Hallowe'en! In both Sydney and Adelaide Frogwatchers are encouraged to do daytime visits to their sites in the weeks after the census to report on frogspawn and tadpoles. Tadpoles can be very difficult to identify, especially without close capture. An idea of what to expect may be gained from your report, but expect the occasional surprise. If you didn't hear pobblebunks, but find large healthy tadpoles, it may be that those in your area had bred in late winter rather than spring.



A few pointers on frogs' eggs:–

- The Kings of the Riverbank (*Limnodynastes* spp.) frequently form free-floating foam rafts of frogspawn. *L. tasmaniensis* (the Spotted Marsh Frog) may spawn every two or three weeks across her season, so you may find fresh small rafts (around 5 cm across) on several visits [these are in the overflow of the lower dam on Barracks Creek]. Pobblebonk rafts are large, between 12 and 18 cm across, according to Lintermans, M & Osborne, W (2002) *Wet & Wild* Environment ACT, Canberra. The foam rafts of *Limnodynastes* are designed to maximise the numbers of tadpoles that hatch, but apparently there is a leech (*Bassianobdella* sp.) that can break in and eat Spotted Marsh Frog eggs (anon.(2005) *Australian Frogs* Penguin mini, Melbourne).
- Burrowing Frogs (*Neobatrachus* spp.) lay non-foamy large masses of eggs.
- The Tree-frogs (*Litoria* spp.) lay their small clumps of spawn attached to emergent vegetation without any foam. Ewing's Tree-frog is reported to lay several times a year and on each occasion may lay up to 15 clumps per square metre of water surface (Tyler, MJ (1978) *Amphibians of South Australia* Handbooks Committee, Adelaide), and related Maniacal Cackling Frog and Whistling Tree-frog may do likewise. The Green and Golden Bell Frog on the other hand lays dinner-plate sized egg masses that are quite quick to sink.
- The Froglets (*Crinia* spp.) may lay eggs near vegetation in the shallows or hidden by pebbles and small snags. There are usually very few eggs at any one clump, and again no foam.
- The Orange Groined or Smooth Toadlet (*Uperoleia laevis*) attach their eggs singly or in twos or threes along submerged aquatic vegetation. They have a narrow halo of jelly in comparison to the *Crinia* eggs.
- If you find frogspawn in wet marshy ground in summer or autumn it may well belong to Bibron's Toadlet (*Pseudophryne bibronii*) a small species no longer commonly encountered here.

Native tadpoles are rather variable in size, form and things like colour and eye position. Pobblebonk tadpoles are large, light brown in colour and have numerous pale blotches on the tail. Striped marsh frog tadpoles are dark in colour and graze actively. If you see striped tadpoles that are active but 'dive!dive!dive!' when they notice you there is a good chance they are the tadpoles of Maniacal Cackling Frogs. There is a book on tadpoles, by one of the Sydney group (Anstis, M (2002) *Tadpoles of South Eastern Australia* New Holland Publishing, Frenchs Forest, NSW). Marion Anstis also has an article on line *Native Tadpole...Or Cane Toad* that is worth finding and reading ([http://frogsaustralia.net.au/documents/doc\\_12\\_bufo\\_native\\_eggs\\_and\\_tadpoles\\_of\\_wa.pdf](http://frogsaustralia.net.au/documents/doc_12_bufo_native_eggs_and_tadpoles_of_wa.pdf)).

Collect your daytime observations, and keep listening for calls, and send it all in to ACT Frogwatch. Include the site code where the observations were made, the date, and the weather, and your contact details. I'm sure Anke Maria will be thrilled!

## Calendar

The Training Day and barbecue at Molonglo Gorge Park on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> November is very important. Waterwatch has put on quite a number of events lately and attendances have been unpredictable.

- This one will include a QA/QC session, with fresh calibration solutions, mystery test solutions and the chance to learn improved or new water analysis tests.
- There will also be the opportunity to go through the process of macroinvertebrate sampling (and to arrange to borrow equipment to do the same at your sites)
- and to go through Rapid Appraisal of Riparian Condition, another simple technique that you should be doing and reporting back for your sites once a year.

**Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> November**

**10:00–13:00 hrs**

**Molonglo Gorge Park, Kowen Forest**

*Stephen Skinner*

Waterwatch Coordinator, Molonglo Catchment Group