

# Your Molonglo Catchment

## July 2011

Newsletter of the Molonglo Catchment Group

Coordinator: Andy Westcott ph 6299 2119 email [coordinator@molonglocatchment.com.au](mailto:coordinator@molonglocatchment.com.au)

### Rabbits in Royalla

by *Maryke Booth*

Residents in Royalla had noticed an increase in the Rabbit population and were unsure as to what they could do about them. Our Landcare group looked into it and followed a model used by Carwoola Landcare. We put in for a Community Action Grant, part of the Caring for our Country program. We were successful in getting \$6,941.00 grant.

Initially our program was to provide Chemcert education for landholders to become certified to use Pindone which could be applied to carrots and broadcast in the paddock to poison the rabbits. However, in the planning process we identified land holders had a number of concerns:

- They were worried about the Pindone killing non-target species: wombats, birds and family pets;
- They were not keen on poisons; and
- They didn't want to spend a day training to obtain a Chemcert certificate let alone keep it current.

So Phil McGrath of South East LHPA suggested we use Caliciviris instead. The advantages being Caliciviris is targetspecific, it won't kill anything but rabbits – not even hares. If it is ingested by birds, wombats, dogs or humans it has no effect and you don't need to have a Chemcert certificate to use it.

We ran two workshops of one hour duration each with afternoon tea afterwards. We had 67 participants and distributed some 660kg of carrots for the free-feeding part of program. After the free-feeding we then distributed another 175kg of infected carrots, using 12 vials of Calici, to 55 property owners across the district.

At first, I was worried as I did not see dead bunnies piled up along the roadsides and fence lines. But soon the reports started come in, a few dead ones in the paddock and no live ones hopping around in the veggie patch. Everyone got into the spirit and I had many phone calls and emails, one of the residents even started a blog complete with pictures. It was lots of fun.

Overall the project has been a great success with a huge reduction of rabbit numbers so much so we have concerns about the foxes eating all our natives. Fortunately, we had underspent on project and were able to purchase six fox traps to lend to Landholders to trap Foxes and Feral cats, if you're interested in borrowing one get in touch with Andy Westcott from the MCG for details.



**Phil McGrath from SELHPA talking with landholders at the rabbit control workshop in Royalla.**

## Getting Involved with Waterwatch

*By Annette Haridan*

I'm Annette and I have recently joined Waterwatch as a volunteer.

When I moved to Queanbeyan in late 2006 I quickly fell in love with the Queanbeyan River. Walking the river bank soon became a routine relaxing pastime. I quickly met the wildlife. A wombat came running out of the reeds one evening and grumped at me for coming too close. The busy little native water rats entertained me in the early evening while I watched from the suspensions bridge.

I became protective of the two lone Black Swans nesting each season and worried about the survival of their cygnets each year. I counted them all the time and always felt sad when three would be two. Though I am a cat lover, the predatory activities of the high number of dumped cats on the river and domestic cats generally who can easily access the river, as well as the work of foxes, threatens the survival of water bird chicks in nests along the river. I was unable to gain satisfactory information from the Queanbeyan City Council about monitoring the wild life and protection and feral intervention strategies.

My first sighting of a platypus very early one morning, (and who, I swear, was actually looking at me every time it surfaced, ducking and diving close to the bank), was simply wonderful. I grabbed the opportunity when it arose to keep a formal record of my platypus sightings for the Australian Platypus watch project conducted throughout Australia by the Australian Platypus Conservancy.

When I found out that our local Catchment group existed and was looking for Waterwatch volunteers, I decided to get involved. I have begun to take monthly water sample tests for acidity, nitrates, oxygen, turbidity, etc.. It is a healthy learning curve with the test kit and I am still learning. My river observations have become more informed. One interesting and humorous thing for me was that in using the kit, I realise that I must have paid more attention in my high school science classes that I gave myself credit for

Most importantly though is that I am actively participating in monitoring the health of our river and becoming more informed. Getting involved and bringing friends and family along ensures that we, the community, can develop an informed voice about local urban development issues and changes that may have adverse effects on the river, its ecosystem and the sustainability of our rivers, not to mention that it's nice to catch up the local wildlife on a more regular basis!



**One of Annette's beloved Water Rats frolics in John Knight Park, Queanbeyan**

## Seeing Grasslands

*By David Chalker and Andy Westcott*

The 'Seeing Grasslands' exhibition is one outcome of a project that had its genesis early in 2010 when David Wong saw the potential of photography to help raise awareness of the natural environment.

A successful application for assistance from the ACT Government's 2010 ACT Environment Grants saw the project begin late last year with the aim of raising the profile of grasslands and encouraging interest in this highly threatened ecosystem, the natural environment generally and photography through community participation, online initiatives and this exhibition. The Molonglo Catchment Group has administered the project which has also involved Friends of Grasslands and PhotoAccess.



*Photo by David Wong*

In November 2010, thirteen people with cameras took part in the first Seeing Grasslands photography workshop. The aim of the workshop was to encourage people to enjoy the grasslands and their photography and, hopefully, learn something along the way. Images from the workshop were shared with participants and the wider community through the Seeing Grasslands Flickr Group.



*Photo by David Wong*

Since then the project team has developed the Seeing Grasslands blog, explaining what has been happening and what is about to happen with the project.

The Seeing Grasslands exhibition was the final part in this jigsaw of activities, with a selection of images from David Wong and well known Canberra photographer Chris Holly displayed in the Manuka Arts Centre from the 2nd to 19th June. The exhibition was a great success with a plenty of people coming along for the opening to enjoy the fantastic pictures on display. It is hoped

that this successful project can continue under a new ACT Environment grant with the focus shifting from grasslands to woodlands. To take a look at some of the amazing pictures that were on display as well as those that didn't make the exhibition and some detailed discussions on photography, visit the Seeing Grasslands Blog at <http://seeinggrasslands.wordpress.com/>.

## Natives to bring pollinators to your garden

By Dr Stephen Skinner

As Jeremy Colby Williams very neatly demonstrated in a recent episode of the Garden Show, planting to attract pollinators is time well spent. And while sages and snapdragons will do, some of the locals will do just as well, and often for longer. The huddle of tiny native resin bees (*Lasioglossum* sp.) in the picture to the right are exploiting some marjoram, but could just as happily use a Rice Flower (*Pimelea* sp.).

To be really healthy and sustainable your garden should be alive with local animals of every size and kind, a healthy biodiversity equals a healthy garden. There may be a possum in the Wisteria or a boobook in the Arizona Cypress but, better still and coming down a scale, the more native shrubbery and ground cover you have the greater the biodiversity you will have. The smaller birds – wrens, silver eyes, willie wagtails and honeyeaters – thrive on cover and both insects and pollen. Lizards from penny lizards on the fence to Blue Tongues in the rockery also do well with cover.



Native resin bees on Marjoram



The good bugs abound, exploiting both the natives and the exotics. Every wattle and bottlebrush at flowering time is full of pollinators from buzz bomber Blue Banded Bees to blundering Christmas Beetles. And they visit your tomatoes and zucchinis too! The fungus eaters keep the powdery mildew down as well as the sooty mould. The carnivores make a meal of your aphids. Orb weavers and leaf curlers may be a hazard when they build across from the line to the back door, but aren't they fascinating? All these organisms work to make your yard grow well. They are far less expensive than sprays and potions, organic or otherwise! All you have to do is supply the plants.

The Molonglo Catchment Group has come up with a handy list of native plants that will bring pollinators to your garden. If you are interested in getting a copy of the list, then stop by the MCG office in the Cassidy Arcade, Queanbeyan or email Andy for an electronic copy.

## Coordinator's Report

*By Andy Westcott*

Since April's newsletter the cold weather has well and truly set in and as the colder days are not great for field days, this time tends to be used for planning projects for the future and getting the groups' funding in order. We are working with Jane Myers of Equiculture and Alison Elvin of Natural Capital to finalise dates for our NSW Environment Trust-supported Managing horses on Small Farms field days which will be coming up later in the year. We have also been busy preparing a Community Action Grant application for a project to establish a demonstration property that will implement the methodology taught in these field days.



**Queanbeyan Enviro Expo display.**

The group has also been negotiating our baseline funding for the Catchment and Waterwatch Coordinator positions and this has taken up quite a bit of the groups' time. This process is nearing completion and we hope to advertise some good news regarding these positions and potentially a Biodiversity Monitoring project in the near future as well.

As outlined in an earlier story the Seeing Grasslands project has wrapped up with a wonderful exhibition at Manuka Arts Centre. The turn out to the opening was phenomenal, with Maxine Cooper giving a lovely speech to officially open the exhibition. Thanks to David Wong for bringing this fantastic project proposal to the MCG and to both him and Chris Holly for all their hard work. The MCG's artistic endeavours don't end there. The Along the Molonglo exhibition, in its seventh year, was opened in Queanbeyan on June 5th, World Environment Day, at the Queanbeyan Art Gallery. The artists were challenged once again to capture the Spirit of the Molonglo with this year's theme being People and Nature and, for the first time, MCG provided the judge, committee member Karen Williams, who is a qualified artist. The Artists Society of Canberra component of the exhibition will open on 9th September at Lancaster Hall, Wesley Centre on the corner of National Circuit and Fitzroy Street, Barton.

We attended World Environment Day celebrations in Civic and Queanbeyan in June. At the Queanbeyan Environment Expo we displayed with Queanbeyan Landcare and spoke to the community about Platypus Count, Waterwatch, getting involved in landcare and handed out education material on a range of topics.

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 September edition.

## Support

For more details on events being run in the Molonglo catchment visit [www.molonglocatchment.com.au](http://www.molonglocatchment.com.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.com.au](mailto:coordinator@molonglocatchment.com.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.

