



Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch Newsletter

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New ACT Waterwatch Facilitator

Tanya Noakes has taken over Nigel Philpot's big shoes at MacHouse in Lyneham in hopes of furthering harmony and cooperation between the three catchment groups in the territory.

Tanya has been the Southern ACT Waterwatch Coordinator for the last two years, and thus comes to her new role, already tried by fire.

Previous to that, Tanya worked for AusAid in Thailand and was an Education Park Ranger at a severely mine affected state park in the United States.

Beyond her goals of improved data confidence and strengthened community relations, Tanya is focused on promoting a sense of

cooperation and friendship between all the community-based environmental organizations in the region.

"We all are struggling with the same problems; intermittent funding, drought, and community apathy. We all need to work together to make the Canberra region a showcase for what dedicated, passionate people can accomplish." said Noakes.

Over the next few months, Tanya and the catchment coordinators will be reassessing their priorities, streamlining their reporting processes, creating a regional education program with ACT Sustainable Schools and

increasing Waterwatch's profile in the local media.

Tanya can be contacted at 6207-2246, via snail mail at PO Box 144 Lyneham 2602 or via email at tanya.rucoskynoakes@act.gov.au



Tanya Noakes on her organic farm in NSW



Southern ACT Welcomes Stephen Skinner

Hi! I'm Steve Skinner. I have been very well aware of rivers and riverbanks all my conscious life. I was born on the Manning, and grew up in and out of the Hawkesbury, in New South Wales. Water-plants and freshwater algae have been important in my world at least from second year university. My post-graduate work was split between freshwater and

marine plants of various kinds. After a short stint in the wine industry, and years of teaching, much of it in the Murray Mallee, I had the chance to work on the plants I love, the freshwater macroalgae. They are the ones big enough to see, that make the bath-tub rings in creeks and rivers! For the past seven years I have been the hands and eyes of the

Director of the Botanic Gardens in Sydney, as far as his botanical research went, and the freshwater phycologist (that's an algae nerd) at the National Herbarium in Sydney. I'm delighted to be here, working with all of you, to protect and invigorate the upper part of that great Australian river, the Murrumbidgee!

Willows Mapping on the Murrumbidgee

Willows mapping is underway in our region! The extent of willows is being mapped by the Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment Committee to assist in developing a willows management strategy. The willow strategy is part of the Commonwealth funded *Defeating the Weeds Menace* program.

Tom Nilsen, with the help of the Willows Warriors, will be mapping willows the Murrumbidgee, Goodradigbee, and Upper Shoalhaven Rivers and their main tributaries. Any

information, records or photographs would be a great help to him. He is also keenly interested to hear of any willow sawfly larvae which defoliate willows.

If you want to do a job in your willows, report where willow work is currently progressing, or notice willows showing severe insect damage, contact Tom on 0419-14384 or email him at:

tom.nilsen@act.gov.au



The Willows Warriors mapping willows on the Murrumbidgee



Sawfly larvae dining on a willow leaf



A Taste Of the Catchment : QA/QC Autumn 2007

A big focus of the coming Waterwatch year will be improving our data confidence levels.

Waterwatchers are a savvy group of passionate community members looking after our catchments, one stream, farm dam, and river pool at a time. QA/QC activities give us an opportunity to prove we deserve to be taken

seriously. In the last year Waterwatch data has been included in the ACT government's NRM database, and will be used by the Bureau of Rural Services to map salinity hot spots.

The better we prove our data is up to the mark, the better our information can be used to help our catchment!

Plus QA/QC events are FUN!

QA/QC Training

Mount Majura Winery

March 15th

5 pm-7 pm

RSVP as soon as possible to your WW Coordinator or to Tanya Noakes directly

Meet other waterwatchers! Imbibe and nibble on the best wines and foods our region has to offer!

In the Bath-Tub Ring Around Lake Tuggeranong

By Stephen Skinner, SACT Waterwatch

In every body of water, river creek, lake or swamp, even the birdbath in your backyard, a ring of fuzzy algal material develops at or just below the water line.

The one at Lake Tuggeranong is a bright apple green at this time of the year. This is colloquially referred to

as the 'bath-tub ring', and its colour changes with its composition and its health. Along with the submerged and emergent aquatic vegetation, and the planktonic algae it makes a contribution to the producer industry of the water body, providing food and shelter

for all kinds of animals in the riparian environment.

Lake Tuggeranong's green fuzz contains some expected green macroalgae, such as *Stigeoclonium tenue* and an *Oedogonium* species, and as well has one of the less frequently reported macroalgae, *Schizomeris leibleinii*. *Schizomeris*

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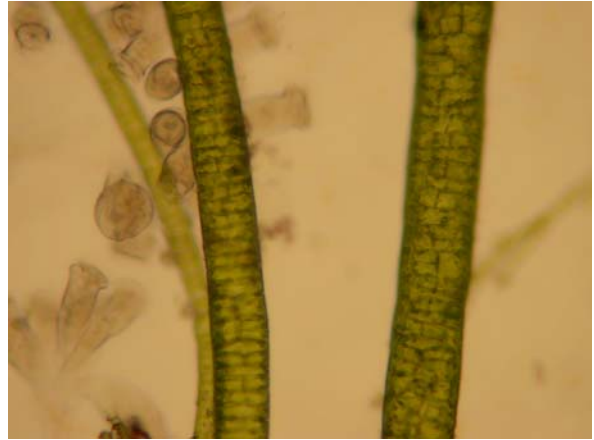
is not often encountered, but when it appears it can be very common, as it is on the bases of the reeds and bulrushes round Lake Tuggeranong.

In among the columns of *Schizomeris* are colonies of tiny single-celled pole-sitting animals. Each pole, smooth and flexible with the occasional spine towards the top, was topped with four to six of these vorticellids.

Each little animal is see-through—the skin contracted to a pumpkin and stretched to a vase—the top a loop fringed with cilia leading to a food groove—the round food packets were sinking past the figure-of-eight nucleus—and

the whole thing continuously on the move!

So, Lake Tuggeranong's bathtub ring does two useful jobs. It fixes carbon dioxide with sunlight to make sugar, as well provides a tiny forest where those predatory pole-sitting vorticellids can hunt the tiny plants, animals and bacteria that swim through it



Schizomeris and the pole-sitters

"In a rainless summer, Lake Burley Griffin can lose as much as 3 Gigaliters of water to evaporation"

With water being scarce in the community, there seems to be a lot of finger pointing and a few urban myths. First among them is that pumping agricultural use is drastically lowering water levels.

Heath's Headlines: Where's the Water Going?

By Heath Chester, ACT Environment Protection Officer for Water Resources

Over the Canberra region on an average summer day, most lakes and ponds lose 6 mm.. of water to evaporation. This works out over the course of a rainless summer to a drop of over 1/2 a meter in depth!

During the summer, Lake Burley Griffin alone can lose 3 Gigaliters of water to

evaporation. In comparison, less than 1.5 Gigaliters of water is licensed to be pumped through-out the entire ACT for agricultural irrigation in any year.

Next time you are feeling dirty at falling water levels in our lakes and dams blame the real culprit,



National Water Security:

Can it be Accomplished?

A significant move forward has come from the Howard government in terms of water management in the past few weeks. The National Water Security Plan acknowledges:

- Significant over-allocation of water in the Murray –Darling Basin
- Planning for climate change must happen

- Inefficient irrigation must end
 - Some irrigation is non-viable in our climate
 - Bore capping in the Great Artesian Basin must be done
- These understandings are a big win for all of us in the water resource field. Many questions remain to be answered however.

Will 10 billion dollars over 10 years be enough? (less than the military's annual budget!).

Will placing the Murray-Darling under Commonwealth jurisdiction rationalize water use? There are many good intentions, the results, remain to be seen.

ACT Waterwatch

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What is Waterwatch?

Waterwatch is a national community water quality monitoring program that encourages all Australians to become involved and active in the protection and management of their waterways and catchments.

Who is Waterwatch?

Waterwatch involves local community groups such as Landcare, Park Care and Catchment groups, as well as residents, schools and landowners who regularly monitor the water quality of local creeks, wetlands, lakes and rivers.

Why monitor?

Healthy catchments produce healthy ecosystems with happy fish, frogs, birds, plants, macro-invertebrates and people. Waterwatch aims to create awareness of water quality issues by involving all members of the community and by forming partnerships between the Waterwatch group and water authorities, resources management authorities, business and industry.

First step

If you are interested in improving the health of your waterway and meeting or forming a group of like minded individuals, you should begin by contacting your local Waterwatch Coordinator.

Making a difference

Water quality information collected throughout a catchment provides a picture of the health of your waterways. Waterwatch groups have initiated many positive, community based conservation activities such as creek restoration, willow removal, removing litter from waterways, eradicating weeds, development of habitats, and reducing the use of pesticides and other pollutants.

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

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ewater CRC
enterprise environment education



Volunteers work for free but
not for nothing!
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Waterways

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