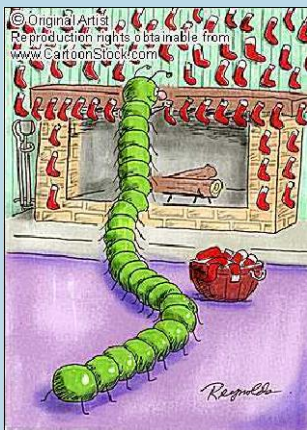


Catchment Connection

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Spring 2008- Regional Update

Major recruitment and staff movement has occurred in the North Central Waterwatch region since the Winter newsletter.

Britt Gregory has returned from maternity leave for 3 days a week after the birth of her gorgeous son Jack (he really is quite adorable).

Leah Cripps has joined Britt as the Loddon/Campaspe (Dryland) Facilitator. Leah will also work 3 days a week and will job share with Britt. Since two heads are obviously better than one, we believe big things will be happening in this region in 2009. Leah comes to us from DPI.

Shane Thaddeus has completed his 12 month contact with the North Central Waterwatch team and we wish him well in the future.

Nicole Bullen has joined the team as the Loddon/Campaspe (Irrigation) facilitator. Nicole is working Full Time and comes to us from Greening Australia.

As there are so many changes, this newsletter includes profiles of all the members of the Waterwatch team. Hopefully this will help you get to know us a bit better, and at the very least you will find out our nicknames!

Spring is well and truly in the air and some very welcome rain has fallen around the North Central region (check out page 4).

National Water Week in October was a big success as usual with four special events held across the region (see page 6).

From all of us at North Central Waterwatch we hope you have a Merry Christmas and an even better new year. Please drive carefully in the festive season and don't eat too much!



Story by BJ Huider

Hop Hop Hooray!!!!!!

Most of you know about my obsession with frogs...you may have even heard or seen me pretending to be one at some stage!

Recently, I was out and about minding my own business when I heard music to my ears...it was the very distinctive call of the Growling Grass Frog! I was caught off guard, but thankfully I always keep my frog recorder in my handbag (you just never know when you might need it!).



Site where a population of Growling Grass Frogs were heard.

The frogs were calling in the middle of the day and it was overcast and raining...not the conditions that most experts describe as preferable for this species. They are better known to be found basking in the sun on hot days.

What was particularly interesting was that they weren't bothered by my presence, as long as I was making noise and positioned downwind of them.

Did you know that the Growling Grass Frog is a predator of other frogs? Because of this fact it didn't surprise me that the Eastern Common Froglet and Plains Froglet were also present.

In fact, the Growling Grass Frog can hear the calls of other frogs, which definitely helps them locate their next meal! Unfortunately other frog species are not so lucky; they can only hear the calls of their own kind.

Lately there have been many "frog whisperers" contacting North Central Waterwatch who believe that they have heard this threatened frog calling, and so far a few of these have been identified as our favourite little frog. One of our very dedicated Waterwatch monitors, Rob Loats, recently found a population of this species at the Rich-Avon weir in the Avon-Richardson catchment. Keep up the great work Rob!

So if you hear a noise like a lawnmower crossed with an angry duck, and the neighbour isn't mowing the lawn and there isn't a pond in sight...then you may just have something we would like to know about. They are known to reside in permanent waterbodies, with fringing or submerged vegetation and good water quality. Dams, wetlands, creeks, and channels are good places to start looking and listening.

Good luck!

Story by Mel B

BRIT Tafe Freebie

Do you need some assistance in working out where to start on fixing the state of your river?

Would you like someone to help you collect information on your creek and to write a plan of what to do and when....for FREE?

Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE (BRIT) Conservation and Land Management Diploma students have 7 months to do just those actions and they need a keen person or group to be involved with so that their work is of use to the community and environment.

Students are available from February 2009 until October 2009. Locations are generally within one hour of Bendigo, Castlemaine, however, a limited number of students range from Avoca to Echuca.

To get involved or to receive further information, please contact Elaine Bayes, Lecturer Conservation and Land Management BRIT. Elaine is available on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays on (03) 5434 1743.

Story by Elaine Bayes

Growling Grass Frog



Animal of the Quarter

We all know that Melanie Barrot is obsessed with frogs, so as Turtles are my passion (so much so that I named my cat Turtle!) it is no surprise that the animal of this quarter comes from the Order Testudines (Turtles).

There is some serious confusion about the terminology used to describe Testudines, particularly when distinguishing between Turtles, Tortoises and Terrapins! Well I would like to set the record straight with the news that might shock some that there is **NO** scientific difference between Turtles and Tortoises and Terrapins!

Turtles are Tortoises~ Tortoises are Turtles~ and they are both Terrapins!

In North America and Australia, they are referred to as turtles. The name tortoise is frequently used only to describe turtles that are predominantly on the land.

In Britain, they distinguish between the two by calling animals that have claws Tortoises and animals that have flippers Turtles.

So, that's where the confusion has started from. Basically it's a you say po-tat-o, I say po-ta-to sort of thing.

All that you have to remember is that they are all correctly called

Turtles. So next time someone tries to convince you that the cute animal you are looking at is not a Turtle but a Tortoise because it lives on land you show them this article ok!

Story by BJ Huider

Eastern Long Necked Turtle *Chelodina longicollis*

Eastern Long Necked turtles, also known as the eastern snake-necked turtle are the most common of Australia's 25 species of turtle and are incredibly adaptable.

They can be found across Victoria and along the eastern seaboard into southern Queensland in freshwater streams, lakes, dams and have even been recorded in raw sewage ponds.

Take a look in your local lake or farm dam on a warm day and you may see

nostrils poking out of the water as the Turtle breathes in air and if the water is clear enough, you will be able to see its shell and distinctive long neck just below the surface.

An interesting feature of all Australian freshwater turtles is that they are able to release a pungent scent from glands located just

above each leg. In fact the eastern long-necked turtle is so good at releasing best smells that they have gained the unflattering nickname of the 'Stinker'.

Adult turtles will only squirt this liquid out if under stress or danger, however, baby turtles just plain stink until they grow larger.

Experiments have shown that even a starving eel will spit out a baby turtle. They must be very stinky indeed!

Long-necks prefer slow moving or still waters where food is easier to catch. Long necked turtles feast upon macroinvertebrates, tadpoles and even small fish.

They have adapted well to drought

so when water dries up, the turtle slows down anything that requires effort so that they may only need to breathe once every two to three days!



***Eastern Long Necked
Turtles have adapted to dry
conditions and only need to
breathe once every two days.***

Story continued on page 4



Eastern Long Necked Turtle continued from page 3.

Eastern Long Necked Turtles may take drought as an opportunity to migrate to more favourable conditions and whilst a risky activity, if successful this has big advantages in gaining access to reliable habitat and food which then allows breeding to occur.

What clever creatures!

Story by Leah Cripps

Rain & Dam Update

Rain has finally arrived in the last month of the year boosting annual rainfall totals in the region. However, the rain needs to be put into perspective before we start getting out the celebratory champagne and strawberries.

Annual average rainfall compared to rainfall totals for this year show the region is still experiencing below average rainfall.

The following statistics are taken from the Bureau of Metrology website,



www.bom.gov.au. Rainfall totals for this year are current as at 9am on 18 December 2008.

Hopefully we have some more rain in late December to bump up the totals!

Avoca

Annual Average Rainfall 535 ml
This year so far 355 ml
Difference of 180 ml.

Bendigo

Annual Average Rainfall 478 ml
This year so far 379 ml
Difference of 99 ml

Echuca

Annual Average Rainfall 426 ml
This year so far 361 ml
Difference of 65 ml

Clunes

Annual Average Rainfall 580 ml
This year so far 402 ml
Difference of 178 ml

Kerang

Annual Average Rainfall 372 ml
This year so far 300 ml
Difference of 72 ml

St Arnaud

Annual Average Rainfall 503 ml
This year so far 365 ml
Difference of 138 ml

The storage levels in North Central Victoria also show a pretty sad story.

Lake Eppalock, on the Campaspe River, is currently at 6.6% with 20,288 megalitres of water currently held in storage.

The Loddon storages also are quite low with Tullaroop Reservoir at 6% with 4,380 megalitres. Cairn Curran is currently at 5% with only 7,406 megalitres of water in the Reservoir. Finally, poor little Laanecoore Reservoir is at just under 10% with a measly 785 megalitres in storage.

Do a rain dance next time you are sampling your stream—it can't hurt! Send a picture of you doing your best rain dance to be featured in the next newsletter to win an awesome prize!

Story by BJ Huider

Can you beat George?

George Showell is a very dedicated Waterwatch Volunteer. George, who is a member of the Guildford/ Upper Loddon Landcare group, monitors 7 sites. George has a big day when he goes "Waterwatching" due to the 57km round trip to get to all of his sites!!!!

He does get a little bit of help mind you, his wife Glenys and their grandchildren help him out, so at least he has company.

Can you beat George?
Do you have more than 7 sites?
Do you drive more than 57 kms to get to your site?

If you do drop me an email to claim the glory and prize. Winners will be announced in the Summer 2009 newsletter.



Acid Sulfate Soils Project Update

The Winter 2008 newsletter explained the involvement of North Central Waterwatch in the Murray-Darling Basin Commission's Acid Sulfate Soils Project. Since its so near Christmas, the following paragraph is a little reminder for those of us who have Santa on the brain.

Record low inflows and river levels in recent years have led to the drying of many permanent wetlands in the Murray-Darling Basin, resulting in the exposure of acid sulfate soils and the acidification of some wetlands. Once these areas are wetted again, the acid could be mobilised (Winter 2008 Catchment Connection Newsletter).



A chip tray of soil samples.

We are off and running with 29 of 80 wetlands/waterbodies being assessed for acid sulfate soils thus far. But of course as you become aware of an issue it appears to be all around you! So far three additional sites have been added and it is these sites that have

triggered the CSIRO team to come out and perform detailed assessments.



Orange staining at the Loddon River site

The Loddon River, Burnt Creek and Avoca River are the three additional sites where I have performed the rapid assessment technique; with the much needed assistance of Michelle Bills from the North Central Catchment Management Authority; and Fred, Jan and Brian Watts our valued Waterwatch monitors.

Soil pH almost as acidic as lemon juice.

On arrival at these sites it was clear that there was a problem. The remaining water, soil and vegetation were stained orange by iron oxide. Each of the sites displayed high salinities and are known to have high groundwater interaction. Soil and water pH levels were measured to be as low as 2.5...that's almost as acidic as lemon juice!

The Loddon River and Burnt Creek sites underwent a detailed

assessment in mid December. I am eagerly awaiting the verdict!

The Avoca River site is of a lower priority at this stage, mainly because it is dry and therefore poses a lesser threat, but CSIRO are expected to return sometime early next year to perform further testing.

Many of the remaining sites to be assessed are located around the Kerang Lakes, Gunbower, and the Northern irrigation area.

Assessments will recommence after the Christmas break and need to be completed prior to the end of March 2009.

Anyone who is interested in helping out or watching how the rapid assessment procedure is performed can contact me.



Mel busy recording at Lake Murphy.

Story by Mel Barrot



National Water Week

National Water Week is an annual event which aims to involve the wider community in water education and activities that serve to protect our waterways and water resources.

This years National Water Week ran from 19 – 25 October. The theme was 'Clean Water: Essential for life!', and the message was clear; sanitation = a healthy community and environment.

Clean Water: Essential for life!

The theme linked in with 2008 being the United Nations International Year of Sanitation, a program designed to put the spotlight on sanitation. The UN estimates that 2.6 billion people around the world do not have access to basic sanitation, which contributes to the spread of disease.

To promote and celebrate National Water Week, a number of events were held around North Central Victoria, including:

- Showerhead exchanges
- Poster competitions and displays
- Riverside revegetation activities
- Sustainable river management presentations
- River cruises
- Treatment plant open days

North Central Waterwatch were involved in four major events during National Water Week: Loddon River Tour, Central Murray Environment Festival for schools, Campaspe Catchment Tour and a Schools Waterways Conference.

Loddon River Tour with Tarnagulla and Bridgewater PS grade 3-6 students

On a sunny but windy day, four stops were made from Laanecoorie Reservoir to Salisbury West to investigate impacts on three commonly used measures of river health: water quality, macroinvertebrates, and habitat.

Students from both schools presented their Waterwatch monitoring results and discussed site specific impacts and trends at their regular monitoring sites.

Guest speakers along the way included the Laanecoorie Reservoir operator and a community Waterwatch monitor.



Tarnagulla & Bridgewater Students.

Discussed by the guest speakers were the uses of water in the Loddon River, changes they have seen over the past 10 years, and works and monitoring that has been undertaken along the River.

37 students and helpers attended the event. Students learnt a lot from the guest speakers and each other.

Mr Frederick volunteered to collect the macroinvertebrates sample- it looked quite shallow until he ventured in.



Mr Frederick in deeper than he expected!

Central Murray Environment Festival for Schools

The third and final CMEF for 2008 was held in Charlton during National Water Week.

Over 180 grade 5/6 students and teachers from within the Loddon and Buloke Shires attended the day of environmentally themed workshops.

Vox Bandicoot performed their Circus Sustainable show for all students. Students were also involved in workshops covering the themes of waste and recycling, aquatic bugs, wastewater, water conservation, salinity, sustainable camping, and biodiversity.

Story continued on page 7



National Water Week continued from page 6.

A new addition to this series of festivals was the sustainable art challenge. Each school was invited to make a piece of art that depicted an environmental message and bring it along to the event. The prize for the winning entry was a digital camera for the school.



Wycheproof P-12 winning entry.

A litter free lunch competition was also held to encourage less waste; the winning school received a worm farm and worms to start them off on the journey to becoming a waste wise school.

Campaspe Catchment Tour

A bus tour of the upper Campaspe River catchment was held for community Waterwatch monitors in the Loddon/Campaspe catchments. 15 participants attended the relaxed tour which followed the Campaspe River through Axedale, Kyneton, Ashbourne and back to Huntly stopping along the way to visit points of interest.

They visited monitoring sites and informally discussed the impacts on the Campaspe River and trends in the

data that has been collected up to date. An enjoyable day was had by all.



Campaspe River at Axedale.

**National Water Week Schools
Waterway Conference
continues on page 10 as the
“Photo of the Quarter”.**

ISC—Get Involved!

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE), in conjunction with the Catchment Management Authorities (CMA) in both 1999 and 2004 benchmarked the environmental condition of Victoria's major rivers and tributaries and the program is called the Index of Stream Condition (ISC).

Program leaders at the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) have recognised the value that Waterwatch data will add to this five yearly state-wide benchmark program. Waterwatch Victoria encourages all regions to participate in this collaborative project. This is a wonderful opportunity to acknowledge, at state level, the efforts of Waterwatch volunteer monitors to show the value of the data they collect.

Four parameters being measured are electrical conductivity (EC), pH,

turbidity and total phosphorus. The only extra requirement is to collect and freeze a water sample in a separate bottle (supplied by the DSE). Waterwatch Facilitators will help with the logistics for delivery of the sample to a laboratory.

Waterwatch volunteers who currently monitor sites 4 times per year may be invited to consider increasing the frequency of their monitoring to monthly for the 12 month period if they would like to contribute data to the ISC program.

Waterwatch Facilitators are keen to assist in this effort so if you are able to sample monthly please contact us.

The incorporation of Waterwatch water quality data into the 2009 ISC will not only increase the extent and value of ISC data but will provide additional value to data which is already being collected by volunteers.

This is a pilot project to explore how Waterwatch data can be further utilised in river health monitoring and research at the state level.

***ISC monitoring
commences in January
so contact Waterwatch
to find out more
and to get involved***

Monitoring commences in January 2009 so only sites that are already part of the Waterwatch or fixed water quality monitoring stations network will be considered for the 2009 ISC assessment.

Story by Leah Cripps



Waterwatch Team Profiles

Bianca Joanne Huider



Regional Waterwatch Coordinator

(Photo is from my sister's wedding last month, I was the maid of honour!)

Nicknames ~ BJ, B, Beej

Favourite Colour ~ Purple

Born in ~ Adelaide

Live in ~ Kyabram

Pets ~ Turtle & Chipperlina both kitties!!

Favourite Movie ~ Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory

3 people I'd invite to dinner ~ Albert Einstein, Peter Cavan & Tyra Banks

AFL Team ~ Adelaide Crows

I relax by.....~ watching bad reality television

Previous Job ~ G-MW

Most embarrassing moment ~ When my friend and I went on Deal or No Deal and had \$10,000 in the bag but left with nothing

Why am I involved in Waterwatch ~ To promote use of the great data sourced by the community.

Melanie Barrot



Waterwatch Facilitator

(Taken whilst acid sulfate soil testing)

Nicknames ~ Mel, Mel Smell (because it rhymes), Melza, Mellie, Barrot, Parrot and many more!

Favourite Colour ~ Green

Born in ~ Dandenong

Live in ~ Coonooer Bridge on the Avoca River

Pets ~ None, but wants a little horse

Favourite Movie ~ Little Miss Sunshine

3 people I'd invite to dinner ~ Aaron (fiancé) Mum & Dad

AFL Team ~ Saint Kilda

Hobbies ~ Shopping, walking, bike riding, visiting family & friends

I relax by.....~ shopping, dancing, chatting & walking

Most embarrassing moment ~ I have so many, but one that I will never forget involves ripping the bottom out of my pants, by catching it on a loose screw hanging out of a chair, in front of about 6 people!

Why am I involved in Waterwatch ~ I have a huge passion for water

and biodiversity (especially frogs!) and it is a very rewarding job. I don't know many people who look forward to going to work every morning!

Leah Cripps



Waterwatch Facilitator

Nicknames ~ Thommo, Crippoo

Favourite Colour ~ Red

Born in ~ Moonee Ponds

Live in ~ Bendigo

Pets ~ 3 cats the Froz, Bubbles & Daffy "Mr Lanchoo"

Children ~ Harry

Favourite Movie ~ Rocky Horror Picture Show

3 people I'd invite to dinner ~ Husband, Roger Walters & Marco Pierre White (to double as the chef!)

AFL Team ~ Essendon

Hobbies ~ Astronomy & relaxing

I relax by.....~ sleeping

Previous Job ~ Project Manager at the Department of Primary Industries.

Most embarrassing moment ~ A few weeks ago....some things are better left unsaid.

Why am I involved in Waterwatch ~ I love waterways and am interested in educating other people about why they are important.



**Waterwatch team profiles
continued from page 8.**

Nicole Bullen



Waterwatch Facilitator

Nicknames ~ **Nic, Nicki, Nickers**
 Favourite Colour ~ **Green**
 Born in ~ **Bendigo**
 Live in ~ **Bendigo**
 Pets ~ **Two adorable ratbags (dogs) named Sonny & Gill**
 Favourite Movie ~ **The Labyrinth**
 3 people I'd invite to dinner ~ **My fiancé Stuart, Maggie Beer & Ewan McGregor**
 AFL Team ~ **Melbourne**
 Hobbies ~ **Cooking, hockey and renovating house & yard**
 I relax by.....~ **walking my dogs, spending time with family and friends, cooking**
 Previous Job ~ **Project Officer with Greening Australia**
 Most embarrassing moment ~ **no comment!**
 Why am I involved in Waterwatch ~ **I want to help people to get involved in the protection, conservation and enhancement of their local environment**

Britt Gregory
 Waterwatch Facilitator



(Obviously this is not a photo of Britt, but there will be one in the next Newsletter)

Nicknames ~ **Brittles**
 Favourite Colour ~ **Brown & Green**
 Born in ~ **Bendigo**
 Live in ~ **Bendigo**
 Pets ~ **Dixie the dog**
 Children ~ **Jack**
 Favourite Movie ~ **Forest Gump**
 3 people I'd invite to dinner ~ **Tim Flannery, my friend Zoltan & Peter Russell Clarke to cook for me!**
 Hobbies ~ **Bushwalking, yoga, crafts**
 I relax by.....~ **doing yoga, bushwalking or watching movies**
 Most embarrassing moment ~ **Being found out in public that I told a HUGE fib when I was 10, I've never lied since!**
 Why am I involved in Waterwatch ~ **to make an environmental difference together with the community**

Who am I?

- I live in South Eastern Australia in both flowing and still waters;
- I help to keep my home clean by eating decaying vegetation and fine decomposing matter such as algae;
- I'm usually translucent (see-through) but can sometimes appear mottled red or green;
- I don't mind water levels dropping and am prompted to breed in small pools of water as I start off my life in a planktonic stage;
- I look very much like an uncooked prawn in the supermarket, but much smaller (usually only 2-4cm long)

I am a—

F _ _ _ _ _ S _ _ _ _ _

Story by Leah Cripps



Photo of the Quarter—



**National Water Week
continued from page 7.**

Schools Waterway Conference

Our photo of the quarter was taken at the Schools Waterway Conference event held during National Water Week.

River Detective school groups within the Loddon/Campaspe dryland area were invited to attend a Schools Waterways Conference at the Science and Discovery Centre in Bendigo.

Approximately 70 students and teachers attended the very successful

day of presentations.

Guest speakers from a variety of organisations presented on various topics including: environmental flows, fish and fishways, aquatic weeds, creating frog ponds, and Gunbower Forest flooding.

Students took away lots of new information and found the interactive displays to be very engaging.

The students took their new knowledge back to their schools and shared it with other students.

National Water Week Stories a joint effort by Nicole Bullen, Mel Barrot and Bianca Huider.

Waterwatch contacts

Regional Coordinator

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Loddon Campaspe (Dryland) Facilitators

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Loddon Campaspe (Irrigation) Facilitator

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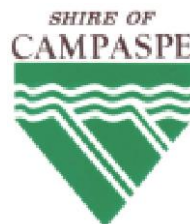
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Avoca/Avon Richardson Facilitator

Melanie Barrot

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**Rochester Campaspe
Water Services Committee**

What Bug Am I?

I am a—Freshwater Shrimp

