

Catchment Connection

...Inside this issue...

<i>Christmas 2009 regional update</i>	1
<i>Demonstrating Change</i>	2
<i>Tully Cripps</i>	2
<i>River Detectives Investigate</i>	3
<i>Ned Gregory</i>	3
<i>Closing the Loop</i>	4
<i>Frogtastic Facts</i>	4
<i>Creature Feature</i>	5
<i>What Bug am I?</i>	5
<i>Kerang & Gunbower Wetlands</i>	6
<i>ISC is Over</i>	6
<i>Rain and Dam update</i>	7
<i>Loddon River Expo</i>	7
<i>Photo of the quarter</i>	8
<i>Contact Waterwatch</i>	8

Christmas 2009- Regional Update

What an busy time it has been for in North Central Waterwatch in 2009. Leah and Britt have new arrivals see pages 2 & 3). Mel and Nicole have started their new projects (pages 2, 4 & 6 for details), and the ISC project is complete (page 6).

After serious deliberation I regret to announce that I have given my resignation to the North Central Catchment Management Authority. I love the Waterwatch program but most will know that I travel from Kyabram everyday and I have found a position closer to home. My last day is 23 December 2009.

I will take with me fond memories of stalling the car numerous times



in front of George Showell, forgetting my gumboots, burning a hole in my jeans whilst ISC sampling, playing tricks on consultants with Anne Hughes, finding the lower Campaspe billabong with John Groat and Muffin at Margaret Moody's.

Most of all, however, I will remember how everyone involved in the Waterwatch program is awesome.

I have decided to continue my ISC sampling sites on the Campaspe River and become a Waterwatch volunteer, so I will see everyone at Waterwatch events in the future (you can't get rid of me that easily).

The Regional Waterwatch Coordinator role has been advertised however there will be a time where the position will be vacant. I have organised a generic email so that even if the Waterwatch contacts change, the contact won't.

Please email through results and any requests for equipment to waterwatch@nccma.vic.gov.au. Sonia Robinson will be monitoring this email and will get back to you promptly.

If you would like to speak to someone directly please ring (03) 5440 1724 and you will be put though to someone that can help.

Thanks for all your support, merry Christmas and a happy new year.

By BJ Huider



Waterwatch Demonstrates Environmental Change

As the Project Officer for the Upper Loddon Campaspe Priority Areas, I have recently been involved in this pre-works monitoring for the project. So, what is pre-works monitoring, and why do we do it?

Pre-works condition monitoring is conducted so that we can gather baseline data at a site before we undertake environmental works. The information gathered will be used in the future to compare to post-works monitoring and to enable us to complete project evaluations.



Nick Layne, Phil Slessar and Nicole Bullen sort through a bug sample at the edge of the Coliban River.

Pre-works monitoring can be divided into terrestrial monitoring and in-stream monitoring. The terrestrial monitoring involves looking at and recording information about the vegetation surrounding a 30 meter section of the stream/creek. It includes information about the surrounding land uses, dominant native and non-native species, estimates of

the amount of leaf litter, and the intactness of the riparian vegetation, among other elements.

The in-stream monitoring is conducted over a section of the stream at least 50 meters in length. We estimate components such as the amount of in-stream vegetation and other habitat types (such as logs and rocks), the flow, bank stability and erosion and the amount of shade provided by overhanging vegetation. In addition to these observations, we take width and depth measurements, water quality measurements upstream, downstream and mid-site, take photos of the site, and collect a macroinvertebrate (water bug) sample.

Water bugs are definitely a Waterwatch specialty and it is my experience in the North Central Waterwatch program that has given me the ability to add value to the works monitoring process.

The bug sample is sorted in the field and a small proportion of bugs are preserved and taken back to the office to be identified to family level. Once we have identified the bugs for each site, we are able to assign a score which expresses the health or condition of the stream at the time of sampling.

The same monitoring will be



Bug collecting ~ Coliban River at Trentham

conducted again in one years time and then at 3, 6 and 10 years. Over time, monitoring will be able to tell us if we have had any impact on the site, and will enable us to improve the way we undertake river health works in the catchment.

So far we have conducted monitoring at four of eight sites in the Upper Loddon Campaspe area.

By Nicole Bullen

Future Waterwatch Monitor Tully Cripps



I am pleased to announce that Tully Kerry Cripps was born. weighing 3120 grams. at 3.18am Friday 20 November 2009 . A sister for Harry and daughter to Leah and David Cripps. Congratulations.

By Bianca Huider



River Detectives Investigate Kamarooka

Waterwatch River Detective students from Bridgewater, Welton and Eppalock Primary Schools were selected to spend a day out at the Northern United Forestry Group's (NUFG) Kamarooka site, in October.



River Detective students enjoying the day at Kamarooka

This field day was organised to celebrate National Water Week and to acknowledge the amazing effort that schools put in throughout the year to do Waterwatch monitoring. These schools were selected due to them being great advocates for our environment, as they assess macroinvertebrate communities, habitat quality and monitor water quality at their local waterway.

The Kamarooka site was once a barren and salt affected piece of land that has now been transformed into a healthy and

productive landscape offering numerous biodiversity values. It's a perfect place for students to learn more about salinity in a hands-on and visual way, and a great example of how the right vegetation planted in the right location can turn a saline wasteland into a green oasis.

A barren salt affected area has been transformed into a healthy productive landscape.

I'm not sure what they enjoyed more...tasting saltbush, eating as many sausages as possible without making themselves physically ill, playing a highly competitive game of cricket, or asking 1001 questions about the pet dogs that accompanied the presenters. Either way, they had a great time and at the end of the day could tell us many new things that they had learnt during their time at Kamarooka.



NUFG Plant Expert Ken Wellard

A massive North Central Waterwatch thank you must go out to the presenters, teachers, helpers and students for a wonderful and fun day had by all.

NUFG has a great website with loads of information that is well worth a look. The link to their website is:

www.nufg.org.au/index.html, and to see some action photos of the river detectives enjoying the great outdoors go to www.nufg.org.au/waterwatch_gold_schools_come_to_.htm.

By Mel Watts

Future Waterwatch Monitor Ned Gregory



I am pleased to announce the birth of Ned Rory Gregory at 10.15 am on 1 December 2009 weighing 3.3 kgs (7.3 pounds for those who still think that way).

Another boy for Britt and Steve Gregory and a brother for Jack. Congratulations to all!



By Bianca Huider



Closing the Loop ~ Jim Crow Creek

In addition to being a Project Officer for the Upper Loddon and Campaspe Priority Reaches project this year I'll also be working on the Jim Crow Creek.

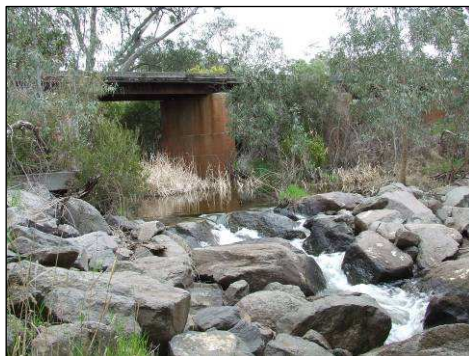
This will involve working very closely with the Guildford Upper Loddon Landcare Group (a fantastic group who are also some of our most dedicated Waterwatch monitors – remember George Showell took out second prize for the monitor who travels furthest to sample in the region), as well as the local community and, of course, the landholders along the creek.

The Guildford Upper Loddon Landcare Group and the Shepherds Flat Landcare group, along with the local community, and natural resource management agencies have been working together on the Jim Crow for almost a decade. In this time they have worked toward protecting the creek from the threats of wandering stock, weed invasion and removal of native vegetation.

Works have been occurring on the Jim Crow Creek for almost a decade.

This year the project hopes to progress further toward a fully fenced creek and to get blackberry and gorse infestations to a level that is able to be managed by the community and the landholders.

The Jim Crow creek is in the Loddon Catchment and begins in the Hepburn Regional Park at the confluence of Sailors and Spring Creeks. It flows for 26km in a northerly direction from steep, forested gullies to undulating grazing land and alluvial flats where it enters the Loddon River, below the Guildford Plateau at Strangways.



Rock Chute on the Jim Crow Creek
9 September 2009. Photo taken by
George Showell for the ISC Project

For further information please contact me on (03) 5440 1877 or nicole.bullen@nccma.vic.gov.au.

By Nicole Bullen

Growling Grass Frog Frogstastic Facts

Since it's the season for Growling Grass Frog surveying I thought it appropriate to get you up to speed on some useful and fascinating facts about the elusive species.

Did you know?

* The Growling Grass Frog is actually a tree frog. Take a look at their feet (if you get to see them up close consider yourself very lucky!)

and you will see that they have toe pads just like all other tree frogs.

- * They can hear all other frogs calling. A pretty useful talent to have when you feast on other frogs for breakfast, lunch and dinner!
- * They enjoy basking in the sun on warm days. Unlike most other frogs they enjoy the warmer weather and start calling between October and March. They have a very distinctive call, but can be confused with a Perons Tree Frog's call when they call in the early hours of the morning when their vocal cords aren't warmed up.
- * They have large tadpoles that can reach up to 95mm in length. They are the largest tadpoles of all our North Central region species.
- * They are listed as a Threatened species under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*. Habitat loss (particularly the loss of permanent, good quality water) and the *Chytrid* fungus are the main threats to the species. Hmmmm....maybe the fact that they eat their own kind limits their numbers too???

Well that's probably enough froggy facts for now, but if you would like to know more please contact me on melanie.watts@nccma.vic.gov.au or 0427 887 254. I am ALWAYS happy to talk about my little amphibian friends.

By Mel
Watts



Creature Feature

Straw-necked Ibis *Threskiornis molucca*

The straw-necked Ibis is a large nomadic water bird, which is thought to be a 'farmers friend'; this comes from the birds preference to grassland insects such as grasshoppers and locusts.

They are pretty to look at and have advantages too!!

The Straw-necked Ibis can be identified by it's naked black head, long down curved black bill, and yellow throat plumes. Its back is a glossy blue-black, with a metallic purple green and bronze sheen. The nape, sides of the neck and under parts are white.



Source Google Images

The Ibis can be distinguished from other Ibises through its straw like neck feathers. When the bird is flying it has a white body and black wings. The Straw-necked Ibises legs are black and they have a 'reddish' tibia (leg).

The Straw-necked Ibis can be found across mainland Australia. The Ibis prefers wet and/or dry

grasslands, crop lands and swampy areas but is rarely found in areas such as coastal shores, mangroves or mudflats and is thought to be less adaptable than the Australian White Ibis.

This highly nomadic Bird will move in search of suitable habitat

The Straw-necked Ibis will feed on mainly terrestrial invertebrates such as Grasshopper and Locusts, but will also feed on frogs, small

reptiles and mammals. The ibis forages by probing or taking its prey from the water body and is rarely a scavenger like its sister species the Australian White Ibis.

The Straw-necked Ibis will form a large breeding colony, their nests are low and are large and trampled platforms of reeds, rushes and sticks over water and quite often blend together to make a continuous platform. They also re-use their nests over several years and both sexes will build the nest, incubate the eggs and feed the young.

While this bird has benefited from increased irrigation in dry areas, its breeding habitat suffers from the negative impacts of increased salinity and destruction of freshwater environments.

By Cass Davis
(Waterwatch volunteer)

What Bug Am I?

- **My middle and hind legs are very long, at least three times longer than my front legs**
- I live on the surface of ponds, lakes and the edges of wetlands or slow-flowing rivers
- **My legs have tiny, water-repellent hairs that hold tiny air bubbles, allowing me to skate on the surface of the water**
- I communicate to my partner by sending rhythmic ripples along the water surface
- **I move with a jerking, pushing movement of my middle legs, and steer with my back legs**
- I will often hunt my prey with other species from my family (like wolves in a pack)

I am a...

W _ _ _ _ S _ _ _ _

By Cass Davis



Kerang & Gunbower Wetlands

Two new projects at the North Central CMA that have received funding through Caring for Our Country (Federal Government) are called: *Enhancing the values of Kerang Wetlands, and Enhancing the values of Gunbower Forest.*

Trent Gibson is the project manager, while I am the project officer working on these projects. Both projects have similar themes in that they are primarily focused around minimising threats to the many values of the wetland systems. The main threats that are being targeted include: pest plant management such as willows, boxthorn and other Weeds of National Significance (WoNS); and pest animal management focusing on rabbits and foxes.



Gunbower Creek.

A major component of the Kerang Wetlands project is to protect cultural heritage and threatened species within the wetland complex. An indigenous crew will be employed to undertake cultural heritage assessments and to ensure that any threat-based management actions are undertaken in a manner that does not compromise heritage values. Another component of the project is to implement the Murray Hardyhead Recovery Action Plan .

The Gunbower Wetlands project involves encouraging landholders along Gunbower Creek to fence off along crown land to protect and enhance vegetation in the riparian zone and ultimately water quality. This process is driven by an incentives program that supplies fencing, contractors to erect the fence, and off-stream watering where required.

For further information on these projects contact either Trent Gibson on 0428 595 898 or trent.gibson@nccma.vic.gov.au or Melanie Watts on 0427 887 254 or melanie.watts@nccma.vic.gov.au

By Mel Watts

ISC is Over!

For 32 North Central Waterwatch monitors the year of water sampling, acid burnt clothes, couriers, photos, parafilm, memory sticks, pH meters, chain of custody forms, shadow testing, reminder phone calls at Dan Murphy's,

building BJ's bargain backyard gauges and meeting forgetful English consultants who are scared of tiger leaches is over.

54 sites sampled.

Nearly 1,000 photos.

Over 350 water samples.

Almost 3,000 results

Now it's over.

The valuable water quality data collected this year will be used in order set priorities for river health funding for years to come, and I think that is just great. I am very proud of North Central Waterwatch having the largest number of sites in the state and the highest number of monitors participating.

I would like to acknowledge the following people for their extraordinary efforts for participating this year in the project: Naomi Blanchard, Nicole Bullen, Lisa Comer, Leah Cripps, Cass Davis, Jan & John Dods, Veronica & John Groat, Britt Gregory, James Groves, Julie Howard, Anne Hughes, Tony James, Robyn McKay, Bill Mudford, Joana Montalvo, Lachlan Moody, Linda Moody, Margaret Moody, Paul Nelson, Veronica Palmer, Ruth & John Penny, Greg Smith, Jenny Somerville, Max Stevens, George & Glenys Showell, Aaron Watts, Jan & Fred Watts, Mel Watts and Fred & Dot White.

Thanks to everyone, you're awesome.

By BJ Huider



Rain & Dam Update

Well it's almost the end of the year and the annual rain figures are in. 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 10 December 2009 and therefore are subject to change. I have my finger, toes, arms, legs and eyes crossed for late rain.

Bendigo

Long-term Annual Mean Rainfall is 478ml
2009 actual so far is ~ 413 ml
That's a difference of 65 ml to the long-term annual mean rainfall.

Echuca

Long-term Annual Mean Rainfall is 426ml
2009 actual so far is ~ 258 ml
That's a difference of 168 ml to the mean rainfall for the year.

Clunes

Long-term Annual Mean Rainfall is 579ml
2009 actual so far is ~ 486 ml
That's a difference of 93 ml to the mean rainfall for the year.

Kerang

Long-term Annual Mean Rainfall is 372ml
2009 actual so far is ~ 307 ml
That's a difference of 65 ml to the mean rainfall for the year.

Saint Arnaud

Long-term Annual Mean Rainfall is 502 ml
2009 actual so far is ~ 464 ml

That's a difference of 38 ml to the mean rainfall for the year.

Unfortunately there are no towns in the region that have received the mean annual rainfall already for the year. St Arnaud and Bendigo are pretty close and a nice Christmas rain event could put it over the top—we will keep you posted!

The storage levels in North Central Victoria continue to tell a sad story. Lake Eppalock, on the Campaspe River, is currently at just over 7.6 per cent with 23,214 megalitres of water currently held in storage.

The Loddon storages also are quite low, with Tullaroop Reservoir at 6.14 per cent with 4,478 megalitres. Cairn Curran is currently at 6.78 per cent with 9,980 megalitres of water in the Reservoir. Finally, poor little Laanecoorie Reservoir is at just 6.88 per cent with 551 megalitres in storage.

By BJ Huider

Loddon River Expo & Maldon Show

The Baringhup Loddon River Expo was held on 16 October 2009 with over 100 local school students attending the event.

The day started with an entertaining reenactment by the kids from Baringhup PS of when bushrangers tried to steal horses from beside the river but were finally caught by the police hiding at the local pub. The day finished with a sing-a-long.

There were many workshops for the kids to enjoy such as an indigenous workshop, native plants, bird watching, basket weaving, fishing and last but not least the "What's Living in the River" North Central Waterwatch workshop (the best one, I am not biased).



The Waterwatch trailer then made its way on 18 October 2009 to the Maldon show. The aim was to create interest for the Loddon River community meetings, with the help of environmental crusader and Waterwatch hero Cathy McCallum. Cathy ran a weed competition that taught me a thing or two and I was able to teach her about moving sticks (caddisflies).



By BJ Huider

What Bug Am I?

I am a—Water strider



Source: www.bugsurvey.nsw.gov.au/html/popups/bpedia_09_tol_wa-st.html

Photo of the Quarter— Kingfisher spied on the Throne



Minding her own business, about to undertake some “personal” business, was dedicated Waterwatch monitor Veronica Groat. To Veronica’s surprise in plain view out her toilet window was this Sacred Kingfisher. Veronica ran to get a camera and was able to capture this magnificent shot of the birdie basking in the afternoon sun.

Veronica and her husband John do regular water quality monitoring on the lower Campaspe River at Strathallan with the assistance of their two canine helpers. A beautiful location where John has sited Platypus and Murray Cod in the past.

Imagine Veronica’s surprise when close examination of the photo revealed a poor lizard about to become lunch, hanging in the mouth of the Sacred Kingfisher.

Great photo
Veronica!

By BJ Huider



Rochester Campaspe
Water Services Committee

Contact
Waterwatch

Ph: 5440 1724

waterwatch@nccma.vic.gov.au