

Cooma Region Waterwatch Update

June/July 2011



Our catchments in June– What does your data say?

June in our catchments has seen some very cold weather, along with cool water temperatures being maintained in our rivers. This is also correlating with higher levels of dissolved oxygen especially in the faster flowing streams.

In general, water quality for June was very similar to water quality in May. EC, pH and nutrient levels were all within acceptable limits for most sites sampled. Sites where levels were elevated showed no change from levels in previous months. Turbidity was zero to very low at all monitored sites and across the sampling time period, except for a small turbidity spike (12 NTU) in the Murrumbidgee River in the middle of the month, corresponding with the slight rise in levels as seen on the right.

It's a great time for spotting platypus!

While most of our riparian flora is looking less than showy at the moment, our aquatic friend, the platypus is becoming more active in preparation for mating in August/September and can even be seen in the middle of the day if you are lucky. If you do spot a platypus, please contact Waterwatch so we can keep a record of sightings in our region. Alternatively join our Platypus Watch Program to be launched in August (more details overleaf).

Weather for June (as at Cooma Visitor's Center)

(Source: www.bom.gov.au)

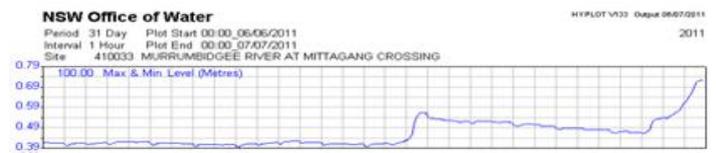
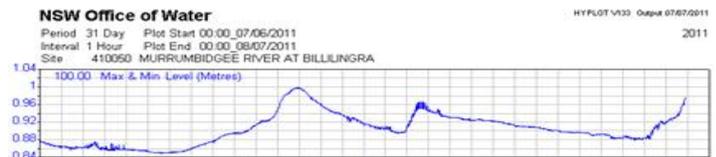
Total monthly rainfall: = 7.3 ml

Long term av. monthly rainfall for June: 36.8 ml

Maximum temperature: 15.5 °C

Minimum temperature: -8.5 °C

River heights (Source: www.realtimedata.water.nsw.gov.au)



Water quality parameters tested by Waterwatchers in our local waterways

Turbidity– measure of 'murkiness', can be an indicator of sediment pollution. Levels above 10 NTU can affect aquatic life if occurring on a regular basis, low levels are desirable.

pH– measure of acidity. Levels between 6-8 pH units are suited for aquatic life. Levels near 7 pH units are desirable.

EC– electrical conductivity is a measure of dissolved solids or 'salts'. EC levels greater than 1000uS/cm are excessive and warrant attention. Lower EC levels are desirable.

DO– dissolved oxygen. Levels below 4mg/L cause stress to/death of aquatic life. Higher levels are desirable.

Nitrates/nitrites/phosphates– these refer to bio-available nutrient levels which will influence algal growth and productivity in stream. Excessive nutrient levels are not desirable.

Waterwatch data is generated by our team of dedicated volunteers. Without them this program would not be possible! Thanks to all volunteers that have contributed data this month.

If you would like to find out more or become involved in the Waterwatch program please contact your local Waterwatch Coordinator.



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Welcoming new Waterwatchers in the Cooma Region

Cooma Waterwatch would like to welcome three new volunteers to the program. Eve Rees, Chris Cremer and Nicole Clark have completed their first sampling in June, despite some freezing conditions. It can only get better from here! Welcome, we are happy to have you on board.

Cooma Region Platypus Watch Program Launch and Platypus Walk

The Platypus Watch Program has been running in the ACT & Upper Murrumbidgee region for some time. The program, which is a partnership between Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch and the Australian Platypus Conservancy collects information about platypus to track sightings of the species and gain insight into what may be affecting them. Participants in the program typically visit their local stream regularly and watch for sightings for a set period. Results are recorded and submitted.

The Platypus Watch Program will be officially launched in the Cooma Region this year with a platypus dusk walk, lead by Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch facilitator Tanya Noakes, on the 6th of August, 4:30pm, at the Murrumbidgee River Reserve, near Cooma. Why not come along to find out more about the program or just enjoy an evening out watching for and learning about platypus? Please contact Cooma Waterwatch to register or find out more.

MHS year 11 science surveys Cooma Creek

On a blowy and fresh June day, Monaro High School's year 11 science class undertook a field study of the Cooma Creek, sampling physical and chemical water quality as well looking at biological indicators such as macro invertebrates. Four sites were sampled in all, taking in the Cooma Creek from above to below the township. Students worked enthusiastically and efficiently despite the cold conditions, returning to the lab in the afternoon to process their water samples. Apart from giving students an insight into the health of their local creek, the fieldtrip also allowed students to familiarize themselves with techniques and equipment which they would use in future studies or work in the water related professions.

Waterwatch supported the field trip by assisting staff and students with the macro invertebrate survey and identification. The student found that although water quality was acceptable along the creek, a slight decline in numbers and diversity of macroinvertebrates was found across the sites, correlating with the increase in urban landuse. This is not surprising given that stormwater from towns can result in more polluted run-off entering local waterways as well as loss of habitat where banks have been cleared.

Coming Up.....

- ◆ **July Waterwatch sampling weekend**– 16/27th July
- ◆ **'The Bidgee from behind the Lens' Photo Competition**– 18th July (entries close), for more information contact Murrumbidgee CMA, Wagga Wagga Office, 02 6932 3232 or visit the website at www.murrumbidgee.cma.nsw.gov.au
- ◆ **Gambusia Netting Training**– 26th July, 10-12pm, Dinnam's Close, Lake Ginninderra
- ◆ **Don't be a Drifter Herbicide Workshop**– 30/31 Aug, Westwood Farm, ACT. No cost, very practical, AQF3 accreditation/reaccreditation available, contact Steve Welch (62966400), bookings essential
- ◆ **National Tree Day**– 31st July, (Schools Tree Day– 29th July)
- ◆ **Cooma Region Platypus Watch Program Launch and Dusk Platypus Walk, Cooma**– 6th August, 4:00pm Murrumbidgee River Reserve
- ◆ **Macro-invertebrate Training**– 28th August, 2pm, Murrays Corner, Paddy's River
- ◆ **Rapid Assessment of Riparian Condition (RARC) training**– 17th September, 2pm, venue TBA

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ANY OF THE ABOVE EVENTS PLEASE CONTACT COOMA WATERWATCH

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