

*Image on right:* McKellar wetlands boardwalk, accessible via Jeanne Young Drive in McKellar, is one of two wetlands located in this suburb. It is an important frog habitat and plays a role in filtering run-off from the nearby Belconnen Football Club. The wetland pictured is not currently being surveyed; do you know of someone who might be interested in joining GCG's Waterwatch program to monitor this site?

## Why Waterwatch?

Each month, a small army of dedicated volunteers emerge from their homes carrying green bags containing mysterious bottles, tubes, and probes. They head towards their local patch in the Ginninderra Catchment, and there they go through a precise sequence of collecting water, adding potions and recording numbers onto complicated data sheets.

No, these volunteers are not members of a secret society and they are not training in Potions at a school of witchcraft and wizardry – I am of course talking about Ginninderra Catchment Group Waterwatch volunteers!

How often do members of the public approach you when you are performing your monthly Waterwatch site checks? When you are approached, what do you tell them? What is the response you receive? Are members of the public interested in your work, or completely indifferent? How important do you think your monthly monitoring is? Do you feel like you are making a difference?

I want to hear your thoughts about all these questions in order to get a better understanding of where our Waterwatch program stands in the eyes of the



community, with a view to expanding our volunteer base and making our Waterwatch program one of the best in the country.

This newsletter is another new concept for our program, to help you see how your data is improving our understanding of Ginninderra Catchment's aquatic ecology, and providing baseline data so we can fight to preserve and improve this beautiful ecosystem. You may also like to show the newsletter to other people to show them what you do.

I am also interested in receiving submissions from you for this monthly publication, which will include a "volunteer of the month" feature so that you can learn more about your fellow Waterwatchers.

I hope you enjoy it!

**Beth**

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## Waterwatch Results for April 2008

April in Canberra is characterised by cool nights and sunny days, and the blush of colour as the deciduous trees begin losing their leaves.

According to the Bureau of Meteorology, April is also relatively wet with an historical average monthly rainfall of 46mm. This April was markedly drier with a total monthly rainfall of only 17mm.

Persistent low rainfall, coupled with ongoing dry conditions has resulted in moderate to low water levels at almost all the Waterwatch monitoring sites throughout the Ginninderra catchment. The only exception to this was

the McKellar wetland, which reported high water levels not seen for over six months.

Acidity (pH) and electrical conductivity (EC) was acceptable at all sites this month (ranging from 6.2 to 8.3).

Turbidity exceeded acceptable limits at a number of sites, with Ginninderra Creek at the Gunghalin Gauging Station reporting the highest turbidity (40 NTU).

Dissolved oxygen was low at the Giralang Stormwater drain (5%) and at Coppins Crossing (27%), but generally good elsewhere in the Catchment.

*(continued overleaf)*

# GINNINDERRA CATCHMENT GROUP

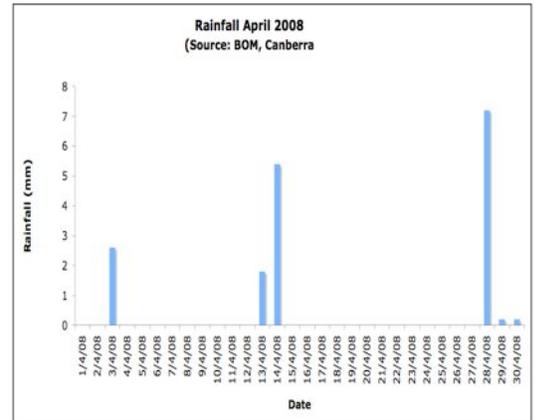
## Table of Results for April 2008:

Parameter	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
Air temperature	15.9	10.0	21.0
Water temperature	13.4	7.0	19.0
pH	7.0	6.3	8.2
EC	310.3	75.0	734.0
Turbidity	13.4	0.0	40.0
Dissolved oxygen	6.6	0.8	10.0
Orthophosphates	0.3	0.0	0.10

## Waterwatch Results Continued

(continued from front page)

A number of volunteers commented on the lack of rubbish found in and around their sites this month, with Peter Hoad suggesting that school holidays might be responsible. Caroline and Lucy Wenger noted that all the rubbish observed at their Waterwatch site on Kippax Creek was embedded in either aquatic vegetation, or in the stream bank itself, suggesting the rubbish had washed in from upstream rather than having been dumped at the site.



(Above) Monthly rainfall for April 2008.

## FOCUS ON...

### *Phragmites australis* "Common Reed"

This is one of the most common native aquatic reeds you'll see in the catchment, and at the moment they are sporting feathery panicles (the flower or seed heads), which can be 40cm long.

Phragmites can reach 4m in height and often forms dense reed beds that can be quite impenetrable. The leaves are alternate and reach 70cm in length; the stems are rigid, many-noded and reach 15cm in diameter.

While it can become a weed, Phragmites is an important component of wetland ecosystems, providing shelter to a variety of animals, preventing erosion and cleansing urban run-off.

Phragmites is found in stationary or slow-moving water bodies, margins of creeks and streams, channels and drain, swamps, areas with a high water table or that are seasonally flooded.



### References:

- pBase Gallery  
(<http://www.pbase.com/image/49410328>)
- Wikipedia  
(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phragmites>)
- Sainty & Jacobs (1994)  
"Waterplants in Australia: A field guide", CSIRO Australia.



WE'RE ON THE WEB!

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