

SOUTHERN NEWS

MARCH 2020

IMPORTANT DATES

An easy to view calendar of member group work parties and events is now available on our new website.

Go to : <https://sactcg.org.au/coming-events/> to see the full listing of what groups are doing.

Please contact Correa at communications@sactcg.org.au us if information about your group or events needs updating.

Due to COVID 19 many great SACTCG projects planned for this year will be postponed or not go ahead as planned given the current situation.

We are working on other means of engaging with the community in the coming months to keep us connected whilst practicing social distancing. This is likely to be through video technology and other IT tools.

Please see our one-page COVID -19 Safety Protocol for ParkCare and Landcare groups at the end of this Newsletter.

From the Office

Hi all. It's been a very intense start to the year with drought, fire, smoke affecting so many people in our catchment area. Our farmers in and neighbouring burnt areas have also been hit by heavy rains after the fire bringing down fences and debris from the fire grounds. With almost half of our catchment area burnt in the Orroral Valley Fire the response from the community wanting to lend a helping hand has been fantastic.

We are still working with our Peak Body, Landcare ACT to harness community volunteer interest and help restore habitat for species affected by the fire. If you are interested please sign up to our register [here](#).

We have many small Adopt-a Park and ACT Environment Grant projects with our members which we still plan to deliver this year as many are contractor based and don't require gatherings. We have had a pause over summer in trialling our new steam weeding machine but plan to trial it on both rural lands and in areas ParkCare groups operate in partnership with PCS. We also have some exciting citizen science projects in the planning stage with wildlife cameras and tree health surveys so stay tuned!

ACT Environment Grants have been announced so if you have any ideas for a project please contact myself or Fiona soon so we can start planning and gathering information for the applications.

Cheers, Martine (Executive Officer)

SACTCG BBQ and Special General Meeting Postponed!

Due to the smoke haze engulfing Canberra in December, we postponed our end of year BBQ.

Although we had rescheduled for **6pm on Thursday 2nd April**, due to the COVID 19 we are yet again **postponing**. The special meeting to change our constitution to be in line with legislation has also been cancelled. Our apologies, we are keen to run this and will try to schedule again when appropriate.

SACTCG Communication

Brochures

We have finally received grant funding for a promotions kit for Urban Parks and Places in Southern ACT. We will be making a new SACTCG brochure with a fold out map which includes the member groups, and up to 9 new brochures for member groups on TCCS land. The new member brochures will have a similar look and feel to the new SACTCG brochure. If you are interested in having a new brochure designed and printed for your group, please contact Correa at communications@sactcg.org.au. If you have already expressed interest in this, she will be in contact with you in the coming weeks.

Facebook

We've been increasing our Facebook following- if you haven't liked our page, get on it!

Website

Correa has been working on updating the content of our website. If you see anything on the website that's incorrect or outdated, or you would like to add something new - let Correa know:

communications@sactcg.org.au

Landcare for Millennials

We have received funding for a program engaging young people aged 18-35 in Landcare in Canberra. Correa and Hannah will be running this project over the year. We will have a roaming group of young volunteers to help with projects in Woden/Weston Creek, Tuggeranong region and rural areas. The program is in its early stages but keep an eye out for updates on our Facebook and emails. If you know any young people interested in Landcare, let them know! If your group could use some extra hands for a working bee (especially young and enthusiastic ones), get in touch with Correa at communications@sactcg.org.au. We will be in touch with members about this once the COVID 19 situation settles.

Healthy Waterways Update

World Wetlands Day at Curtin Raingarden

SACTCG celebrated world wetlands day at the Healthy Waterways Raingarden in Curtin. Hannah, our urban water guru, had a wonderful morning chatting to residents about how the raingarden works and how we can all improve the quality of water going into Canberra's lakes and rivers. Neighbours to the raingardens were

very impressed by the number of frogs that have popped up in after the last few rain events. One of the main topics of discussion was how residents could reduce leaf litter from the large oak trees planted along the roadside. Some ideas were an informal community compost pile made from the leaves that anyone looking for some extra Carbon for their worm farm could help themselves to.

The series of three raingardens in Curtin, will remove 61,000kg of Phosphorous, Nitrogen and suspended sediment every year from the stormwater that flows in; this treated water then flows from Yarralumla creek into the Molonglo river. Of note is a beautiful seat created and designed by local artists from recycled ironbark bridge beams from the old Tharwa bridge.

You can hear Hannah interviewed on ABC Canberra on the day talking about the raingarden.

<https://www.abc.net.au/radio/canberra/programs/afternoons/how-do-rain-gardens-work-in-canberra-curtin-site/11929114>



Q and As with water smart gardens in Canberra.

We will be running an ongoing column in our newsletter sharing stories, tips and photos from waterwise gardens around Canberra. We will be sharing how local people in the ACT are improving their streets and gardens by being savvy with stormwater.

If you or one of your neighbours has been getting inventive with water capturing and use, please let us know so we can feature you in our newsletter. Email urbanwater@sactcg.org.au to find out more.

Profile 1

Christine and Warwick Finch, Chisholm.

Could you tell us a little bit about your house and garden?

We bought our house in 1990. It sits on a 900m² block on the uphill side of Hambidge Crescent Chisholm, in the same street as the shops and local primary and secondary schools. It slopes towards the road, which has brought challenges in terms of keeping storm water on our property.



We have a keen interest in gardening, ecological sustainability, and urban self-sufficiency, and really enjoy the knowledge and benefits that gardening brings.

Why did you apply for a H2Ok grant?

We applied for a government grant under the H2OK initiative to improve water catchment, utilisation and run-off from our property. We already had some initiatives in place such as tiered garden beds to help slow run-off, and an antiquated drip irrigation system. However, in heavy rain, water would still stream downhill, cutting a channel through the nature strip and depositing any of our attempts to mulch the area down the road. The irrigation system kept splitting, and our only means of collecting and retaining rainwater was a makeshift poly pipe running into a re-purposed olive barrel.

What did you use the H2OK grant for?

We used our H2OK grant towards installing a 5000-litre rainwater tank, replacing irrigation tubing and re-vegetating the nature strip to absorb run-off from the neighbouring property. We also had a large pond installed. This is not only an aesthetic feature, but provides a catchment area, a home for our koi, and a drinking hole for our bees.

Could you describe the before and after of your nature strip and whether the planting has had any impact on how water flows?

Our nature strip was originally covered in compacted scoria, which was not very permeable. When it rained, water would stream down across it and onto the road. This became worse when the property next door was developed into a dual occupancy block and was basically concreted from front to back. We got their run-off too and attempts to alter the flow of water using bricks as a barricade proved futile.

The problem was solved by removing the scoria, digging out the compacted clay and replacing it with better soil. The area was then planted with Lomandra (variety Majestic Little Pal) which has thrived. The roots of these plants have bound the soil, and water is now trapped on the nature strip rather than running onto the road and down the storm water drain.



Upcoming event:

22/3 Celebrate World Water Day at Mawson Pond

Interested in learning more about urban ponds and waterways? Come along and learn more about the Healthy Waterways pond at Mawson!

10am Sunday 22nd of March

Come along to learn more about:

- How ponds and wetlands treat stormwater
- Where stormwater in Canberra goes

What you can do to help improve the quality of lakes in Canberra

NOTE: Social distancing measures and COVID 19 safety protocols will be in place for this event.

Member Group Happenings

Gudgenby Bush Regenerators

GBR have been unable to get into their area due to the Orroral Valley fire and are keen to find out how it has fared.

Will update in the next newsletter about their area of Namadgi.

Mount Taylor ParkCare Group

Mapping Mt Taylor's Dead and dying trees 🤖

Mt Taylor ParkCare is seeking volunteers with smartphones to help us log mature trees on Mt Taylor that have succumbed to the drought using **The Dead Tree Detective**, working off the Atlas of Living Australia (ALA) Platform <https://biocollect.ala.org.au/ala/project/index/77285a13-e231-49e8-b212-660c66c74bac> This is an important project to track the effects of climate change on our native vegetation. Those interested should have a look at the website and the resources page, as you will have to answer a few questions when you upload a sighting (not heavy though). You will also need to set up an ALA account <https://auth.ala.org.au/userdetails/registration/createAccount> or you can use an existing google or social media account to access ALA. Contact Kathy if you are interested to get an area to map so we don't double up - mttaylorparkcaregroup@gmail.com

Citizen Science for Bushfire Recovery

Volunteer citizen scientists can help map the impact of the devastating bushfires by uploading observations of flora, fauna and fungi in the affected areas in south-east Australia. The project is managed by the UNSW with a new portal on the Atlas of Living Australia (ALA) Platform, <https://inaturalist.ala.org.au/projects/environment-recovery-project-australian-bushfires-2019-2020>

Make sure the affected areas are open to the public and declared safe by the land manager before entry.

Coolleman Ridge ParkCare Group

Cleaning out the Old Dam and the Wonder and Joy of Rain

In late February Chris, Linda and Rob spent over 12 hours clearing *fleabane* out of the Old Dam. After first cutting off the seed heads and taking them off the Ridge, the *fleabane* was pulled out, leaving native *Persicaria* behind in a few centimetres of water. Early March rain saw the *Persicaria* almost covered.



The Old Dam before weeding fleabane Photo: Rob Lundie



The Old Dam after weeding fleabane Photo: Rob Lundie



The Old Dam 5 Mar 2020 after about 70 mms of rain Photo: Chris Oates



Farm Dam 6 Feb 2020 Photo: Rob Lundie



Farm Dam 19 Feb 2020 after 88mms of rain

Photo: Rob Lundie

Friends of Tidbinbilla

What a start to the year! The devastating Orroral Fire also burnt through adjacent parts of Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, impacting Devils Gap, the Fishing gap trail and the headwaters of the Tidbinbilla River. The wildlife team removed many of the captive breeding populations to safer environs, such as the Corroborree frogs, koalas, platypus and bettongs. As in Namadgi, staff are still assessing damage and looking at reintroducing these animals.

We did get int to do our Water testing in February, just after the first downpour after the fires. None of our sites are within the impacted areas, but the silt and ash from the top of the river is moving though, as well as debris from the fires. At our top sits in the Tidbinbilla river our phosphorous was very high at 0.25, EC was massive at 420 and turbidity was 40. This is to be expected after the fires and the silt will naturally make its way through the system.

In time I will compare to our readings after the 2003 fires, but in the few years after our water bug diversity plummeted, so I expect a similar impact here.

Some of the reserve is open again while other areas are still being assessed for safety.



Croton Park Carers

We are a small group of residents living near Croton Park in Rivett. This urban park is quite sparse as dead plants have not been replaced over the years. We are grateful to SACTCG for helping us get an Adopt A Park grant to undertake some planting.

Our aim is to re-green the park with a variety of local native plants, especially understory species, to provide a haven for residents and residents.

Indirectly it is a wonderful opportunity for people to get to know each other and strengthen the local community networks.



SACTCG WATERWATCH: SUMMER 2020

From the Coordinator's desk:

The start to this decade was one of the worst summers on record. All our waterways were affected by extremely hot weather that followed prolonged drought. 21 sites in 11 of our 24 reaches were dry by the end of December. For most of January the extreme fire risk kept Waterwatchers out of Tidbinbilla and Namadgi. A severe storm cell fell on parts of Canberra in late January. A number of large 'fish kill' events appeared in our urban ponds shortly after as oxygen levels plummeted in the wake of bacterial uptake of carbon, presumably from all the smoke, washed into our urban waterways in February. Heavy rain in mid February washed tonnes of burnt fine sediment and ash into our rivers.

The intrepid nature of our Waterwatchers is captured below in the photos sent in as volunteers braved the conditions to gather essential from this insane season.

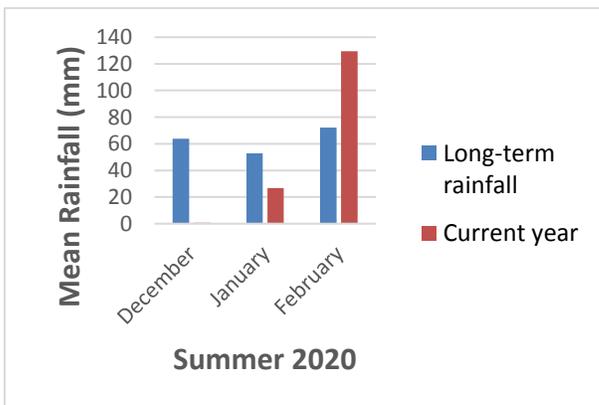
Teams update:

Welcoming aboard new members this summer includes;

- Crystal McNaughton, monitoring the southern end of Lake Tuggeranong
- Sijia Ding, following on from Emily Brooks at the northern end of Lake Tuggeranong

Around the waterways:

Thanks to our teams for the following photos;



Rainfall statistics courtesy of Bureau of Meteorology

Photos of Lake Tuggeranong by Crystal McNaughton and Laureen Harrison



Murray's Corner by Maree Blume.



Gudgenby River by Deb Kellock



(Above) Tidbinbilla River by Fiona Spier. (Look closely and you can see animal tracks in the sludge.)

(Below) A boat load of plastic bottles picked up by Tom Nilsen from Point hut Ponds after the rains.



Communities Caring for Catchments

A huge thank you to all those groups and individuals involved in collecting data. To view Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch data, go to <http://www.act.waterwatch.org.au>. For more information contact the SACTCG Waterwatch Coordinator on 62966400 or at waterwatch@sactcg.org.au .

Martin Lind.

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VOLUNTEER SAFETY PROTOCOL: COVID-19

Landcare and Parkcare working bees are not only good for the environment but great for our physical and mental wellbeing. This is especially important in times like these. Working bees are considered low-risk but by following these protocols we can minimise the chance of attendees contracting or spreading COVID-19.



- Do not attend any events if you are feeling unwell; or are self-isolating due to returning home from overseas, contact with a confirmed case or experiencing symptoms.
- Keep a 1.5m distance away from others where possible.
- Wash and/or sanitise your hands before and after the event.
- Sneeze or cough into your elbow.
- Avoid all contact with surfaces, and avoid touching your face.
- Do not share food or drink.
- Advise the group convenor if you have had or develop flu-like symptoms before or after attending an event.
- Travel to events separately or with someone you know is healthy.
- Please note: if you are over 65 or in another “at risk” category we recommend that you exercise more caution. Consider outdoor activities alone or with less than 5 people.
- See www.health.act.gov.au for up to date information and advice.

Contact Us

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Facebook page: Southern ACT Catchment Group

The Southern ACT Catchment Group gratefully receives funding support from the ACT Government

