



Bendigo Urban Lakes Project 2005 and beyond

Enthusiastic Bendigo Waterwatchers are helping to understand the health of their urban lakes, and collecting valuable data along the way.

Bendigo's urban lakes have suffered from stormwater rubbish, run-off and chemical pollution. In 2003 the North Central Catchment Management Authority and the City of Greater Bendigo established the Bendigo Urban Lakes Water Quality Plan which set out to improve the water quality of five local urban lakes. Endorsed by the City of Greater Bendigo, North Central Waterwatch became the central organisation for coordinating community water quality monitoring. In 2004, community groups began monitoring water quality in the urban lakes.



The Eaglehawk Environment Group were the first to begin monitoring. Julie Sloan took on the monitoring responsibility for the group, and began physical and chemical testing in Lake Neanger and Lake Tom Thumb early in 2005. *"The data I collected shed light on the vast differences in water quality between the two lakes, which are separated by less than 100 metres,"* Julie said. *"We're still working on what those differences mean."*

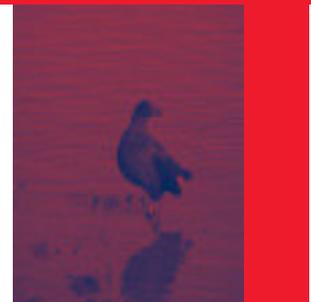
Regional Coordinator Leigh Mitchell said, *"Hopefully by this time next year we will have discovered the reasons for the differences. It gives a real purpose and provides a challenge for monitors in 2006."*

Three schools - Weeroona College, Kangaroo Flat Primary School and Kennington Primary School - and the Friends of Kennington Reservoir entered the Bendigo Lakes monitoring program in 2005. Over two hundred students participate in the regular monitoring of Lake Weerona, Apex Park Lake, Kennington Reservoir and Grassy Flat Creek, adding significantly to the effort.



Anthony Sheean, Community Environmental Officer with the City of Greater Bendigo says that *"data collected by Waterwatch groups complements data collected through other professional monitoring programs and may alert us to issues that require further investigation. Council is very supportive of Waterwatch and the monitoring program."*

Regional Coordinator Leigh Mitchell is proud of the program's achievements to date. *"This program is delivering more than educational outcomes. The monitoring data collected by interest groups is providing valuable information that can assist local government manage the environmental quality of the urban lakes."*



Top Local students examine macroinvertebrates during a sampling survey of their local Bendigo waterway. **Centre** Stormwater is the source of many water quality issues in the urban lakes. **Above** Community monitoring efforts are helping to keep an eye on the lakes' water quality, so that they can continue to support the local ecology.