

# Lakewatching at Tuggeranong

Fishing for bikes and shopping trolleys is on the curriculum at Canberra's Lake Tuggeranong College. Students are also required to look for toxic algae, assist field studies and organise an Aquafest.

The activities are part of a college program set up in 1992 to raise awareness of water's importance in the environment. Two years on, the Lakewatch program has a list of awards to its credit, and has raised a good deal more than public awareness.

Lakewatch students take scientific measurements of the chemistry, physics and biology of Lake Tuggeranong at various stations, and observe the lake's inhabitants and local wildlife. Equipment and advice has been contributed by the CSIRO divisions of Water Resources, Fisheries and Oceanography, the ACT Department of Environment, Land and Planning and the University of Canberra.

In February 1993, Lakewatch members discovered and identified the toxic blue-green algae *Microcystis*. This caused authorities to close the lake for a few weeks until the algae subsided. The bloom reappeared in March 1994 and the students' routine measurements showed a correlation between the appearance of algae and a few weeks of warm water (25-27°C).

Later in the year a submerged shopping

trolley was accidentally snagged by a water-sample bottle. With help from the local fire brigade, 118 trolleys, four bikes and a tree have since been recovered.

Lakewatch coordinators Peter Costa and David Everitt say the demonstration that action can be taken to improve the local environment has fuelled community enthusiasm for the program. They say public education – such as alerting people to the consequences of phosphate fertiliser use – was one of the program's original goals.

Local businesses will take part in a water festival called Aquafest, to be held at parkland near the college on October 21-22. This coincides with the eve of National Water Week. CSIRO's Division of Water Resources is helping to organise the event, which will highlight the 'universality of water in our lives'.

Lakewatch has provided inspiration for students in many subjects other than science. Students design promotional material; input results onto spreadsheets; write articles; analyse samples; construct instruments; shoot photos and videos; and take part in exhibitions and interviews.

'A major reason for the program's success is that we have overcome the myth that environmental monitoring requires chemists and scientists,' Everitt says. 'We have



**Analysing the chemistry, physics and biology of Lake Tuggeranong is all in a day's work for members of Lake Tuggeranong College's Lakewatch team.**

attracted a large range of students who enjoy contributing to the wellbeing of the lake through their own talents.

'We also hope that when people see something positive being done about the lake they will be encouraged not to pollute and harm the area.'

*Contact: David Everitt, Lake Tuggeranong College, PO Box 1188, Tuggeranong, ACT 2901, (06) 205 6222, fax (06) 205 6202. National Water Week Coordinator, Victor Conrick (02) 895 7862, fax (02) 895 7102.*

*Bryony Bennett*