HFNC Excursion to Nigretta Falls and Wannon Falls rock pools on 18 November 2023

Diane Luhrs & Rod Bird

Participants: D Luhrs & R Bird, P Hocking, R Zollinger & Y Ingeme, R Simpson, S Scott, Sarah Patterson and our leader for the day, Bruce McInnes.

Nigretta Falls Scenic Reserve

We left Hamilton at 9 am and drove first to the Swimming Hole on the Wannon River at Nigretta Falls. We walked along the river path to the beautiful rocky area upstream from the Falls, where we set up a table and trays to examine the aquatic life that was collected. The reserve looked inviting and with the river lower than earlier in spring it was possible to clamber over much of the rocky area leading to the precipitous falls.

Bruce & Ross inspect a catch

Peter, Rod, Bruce and Ross with specimens

Reto & Yvonne inspect a catch

A rock pool in the centre of the river

Viminaria juncea on an island

Reto sampling pools and channels

The water was very clear as Bruce, Ross and Reto set about dip-netting along the rocky pools and waterways. There were several large shrubs of Golden Spray (*Viminaria juncea*) growing on rocks in the middle of the river and these were in flower, although just past their showy best.

Other native vegetation around or among the rocks included Lesser Joy-weed (*Alternanthera denticulata*), Water Ribbons (*Cycnogeton procerum*), Water-buttons (*Cotula coronopifolia*), Narrow-leaf Cumbungi (*Typha domingensis*), Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), River Red-gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) and River Teatree (*Leptospermum obovatum*).

We examined the catch when transferred to the table. Bruce had a number of illustrated guides to assist our identification, many to genus level – others are identified by their common names. The presence of a great variety of macro-invertebrates with many regarded as sensitive to pollution and poor water quality indicated to us that the water quality of the Wannon River was ecologically healthy.

Aquatic fauna found at Nigretta Falls rock pools:

1. Glass Shrimp (*Paratya australiensis*)
2. Water Flea (*Daphnia* sp.)
3. Water Beetle (*Naucoris congress*)
4. Water Boatman (Family *Coriidae)*
5. Backswimmer (Family *Notonectidae*)
6. Water bug (Family *Naucoridae*)
7. Whirligig Beetle (*Gyrinus* sp.)
8. Damselfly nymph (Sub-order *Zygoptera*)
9. Dragonfly nymph (Sub-order *Anisoptera*)
10. Mayfly nymph (Order *Ephemeroptera*)
11. Caddisfly larva (*Rhyacophila* sp.) – in cavities of vegetation stalks
12. Pea Shell (*Corbiculina* sp.)
13. Flood Plain Mussel (*Velesunio* sp.) – empty shells on the rocks
14. Water Snail (*Physia acuta*)
15. Water Snail (*Austropeplea lessoni*)
16. Springtail (*Collembola* sp.) – incidental find
17. Lacewing (Order *Neuroptera*)
18. Scud (*Gammarus* sp.)
19. Water Mite (an *Arachnid*)
20. Chironomid (Midge) larva (*Chironomus* sp.)
21. Striped Marsh Frog (*Limnodynastes peronii*) – heard calling

Wannon Falls Scenic Reserve

We parked at the swimming pool area near the entrance of the reserve. The river water level for the pool there is maintained by a constructed pier that traverses the river. That pier allows access across the river at low-moderate water levels and it also gives easy access to the rock pools downstream from the pier.

We set up our table and containers under a tree by the water and began to collect samples of aquatic fauna. Unlike at Nigretta, we caught a small fish here but it was the feral Mosquito Fish (*Gambusia* sp.). There were quite a number in the water but they were very small. A Water Skink was seen on the rocks.

Wannon River upstream from the Wannon Falls

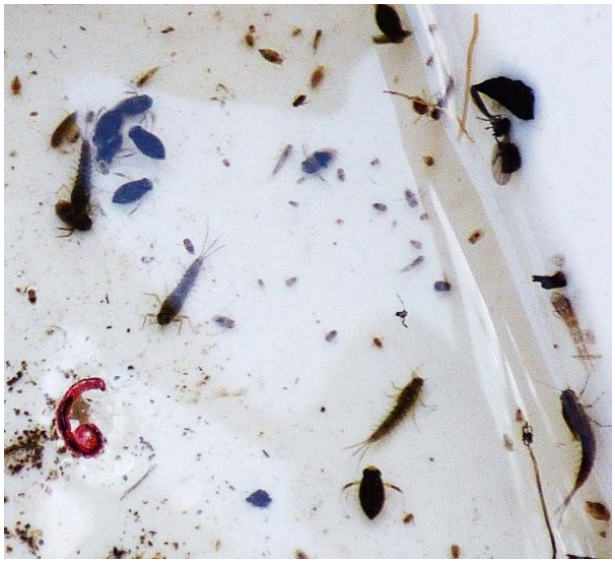
Sarah dip-netting at the Wannon Falls pool

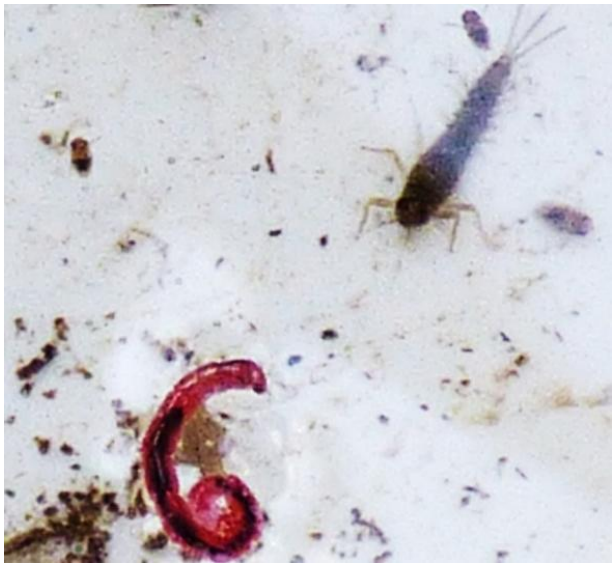
Yvonne, Reto, Sarah and Sarah at work dip-netting

Aquatic specimens found at the Wannon:

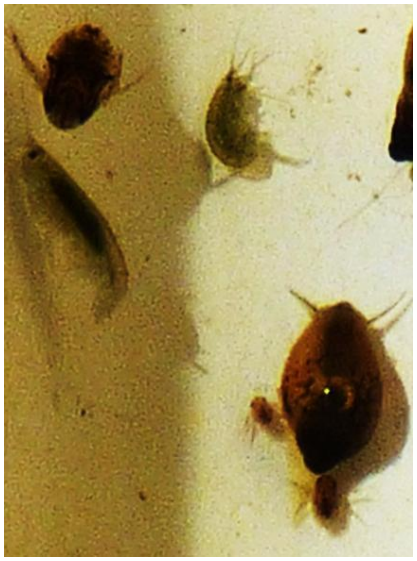
1. Mosquito Fish (*Gambusia* sp.) – invasive non-native fish (introduced in the 1920s to NSW to control mosquito larvae – with little effect)
2. Shrimp (*Paratya australiensis*)
3. Water Boatmen (Family Coriidae)
4. Backswimmer (*Sigara* sp.)
5. Diving Beetle (*Dytiscus* sp.)
6. Midge (*Chironomus* sp.)
7. Pea Shell (*Corbiculinia* sp.) –shells on the rocks
8. Damselfly nymph (Sub-order *Zygoptera*)
9. Mayfly nymph (Order *Ephemeroptera*)
10. Water snail
11. Scuds – (*Grammarus* sp.)
12. Waterflea – (*Daphnia* sp.)
13. *Cyclops* sp.
14. Spiny Freshwater Crayfish (*Euastacus* sp.) – a claw was found indicating this species

Images of organisms across both sites





Midge Larva (*Chironomus* sp.) with beetles and Mayfly nymph



Left: Scud (*Grammarus* sp.), Water Boatman, Snail; Middle: Mayfly nymph, Snails; Right: Mayfly nymph

Damselfly nymph and Waterbug

Caddisfly larva in grass stalk

Damselfly nymph

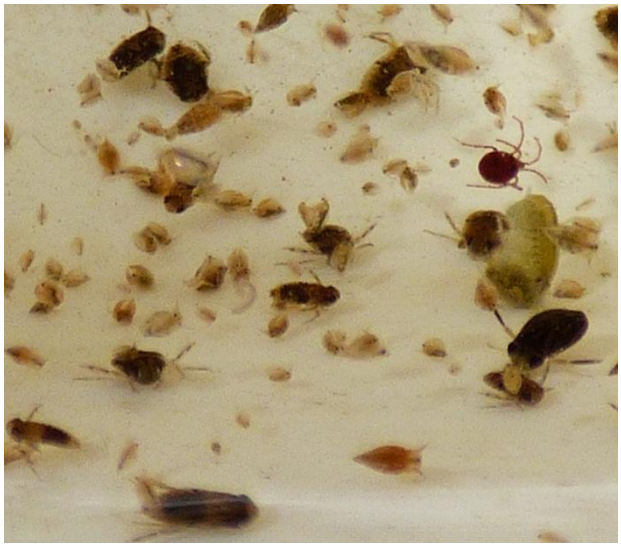
Backswimmer beetle

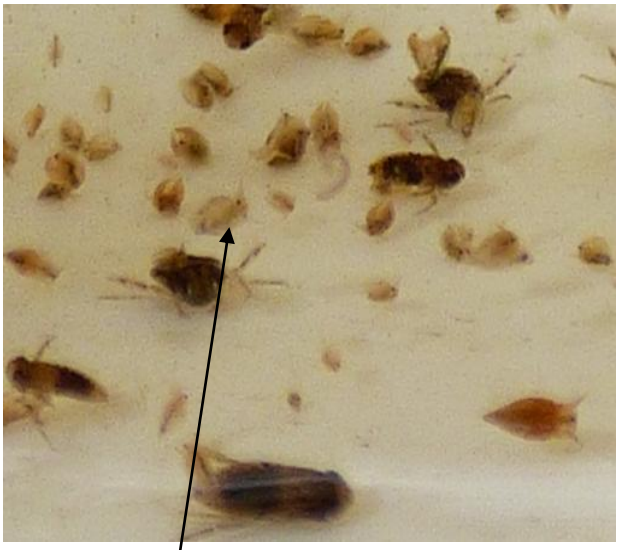
Water snail

Freshwater shrimp, Whirligig Beetles

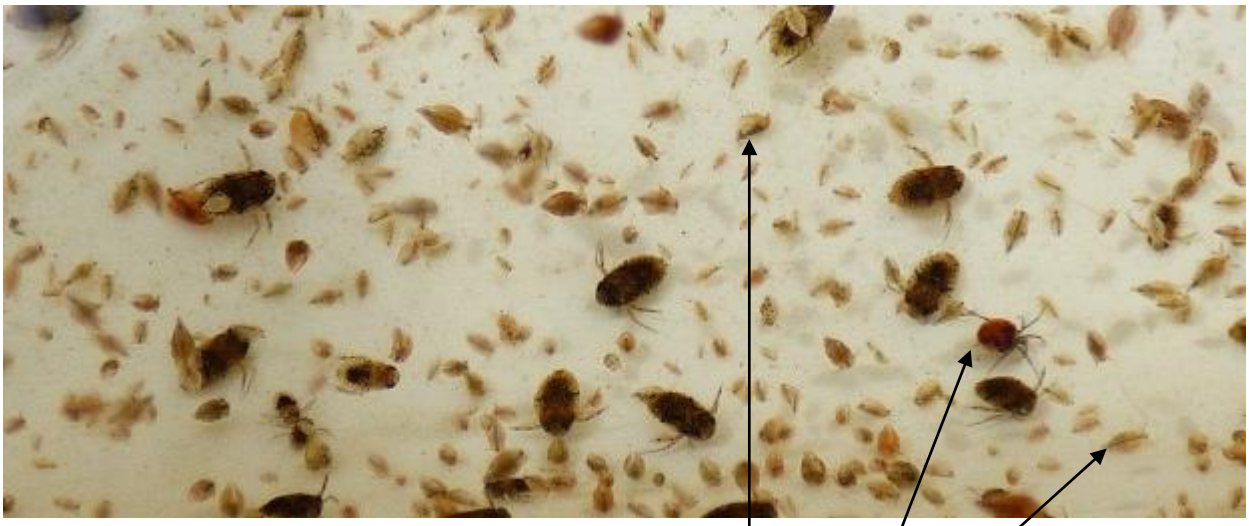
A minute spider

Antlion – adult





Microscopic invertebrates mix with macro-invertebrates – Waterflea (*Daphnia* sp.)

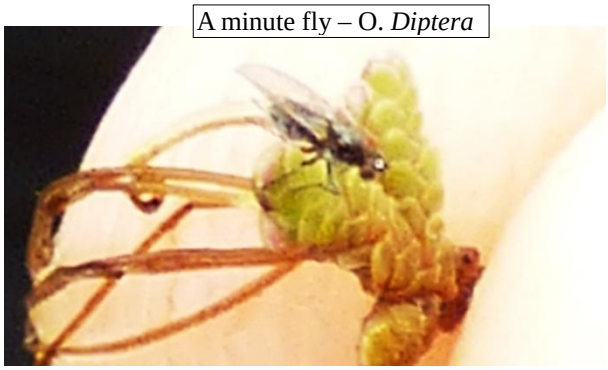


Microscopic invertebrates with macro-invertebrates – Waterflea, Water Mite, Cyclops (perhaps)

Water Boatman, Mayfly nymph, Waterbug

Large Diving Beetle and Water Boatmen

A minute fly – O. *Diptera*



Shrimp and Mosquito Fish

Image shows relative sizes of organisms: Damselfly nymph, Water Boatman, Scud, Mayfly larva

A vociferous White-throated Treecreeper called from nearby River Red Gums and an equally vocal Australian Reed Warbler (far left) flitted along the reed beds. Several Black Duck and Australian Wood Duck (left) were seen in the river. A crayfish claw (below left) was found near the river – possibly from a Spiny Freshwater Crayfish – see spines.

Sarah Scott photographed a Southern Water Skink (*Eulamprus tympanum*) on the rocks (see below).

A number of visitors explored the rocky area in the river and inspected our catch. A neighbour from across the river also conversed with our members. He said the burned area there was an escape from a clean-up of dead branches on the frontage – an effort to prevent visitors in summer from lighting a fire!

After a picnic lunch we left at 2 pm. Some members then did 20-minute/2-ha bird surveys at Wannon Falls Scenic Reserve, Bochara and Four Posts Reserve.