



Streambanks



Streambanks are areas of land running along the edge of rivers, creeks and streams. Tuggerah Lakes catchment has many kilometres of streambanks along its rivers and creeks which flow from the highlands in the west of the Wyong Shire down to the eastern coast. Referred to as the riparian zone, streambanks are mostly covered in vegetation which help to stabilise soil and reduce erosion of the bank. This vegetation also serves as a filter system collecting sediments and slowing runoff before they can enter the waterways. Healthy streambanks play an important role in the water quality and ecosystem health of Tuggerah Lakes estuary.

The main fresh waterways flowing into Tuggerah Lakes estuary are Wyong River and Saltwater, Tumbi, Ourimbah, Wallarah and Spring creeks. When freshwater reaches the lakes it mixes with saltwater which enters via The Entrance channel. The water quality of the fresh water is important because it makes up the main flow into our estuary.

Tuggerah Lakes catchment comprises the area of land that catches water, from the hills in the west to the coastal beaches. Rivers and creeks in the higher elevations of the hills and valleys drains down towards the low-lying coast, forming the Tuggerah Lakes. The catchment makes up 90 per cent of Wyong Shire.

Plants protect banks

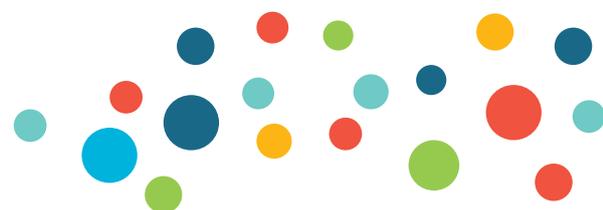
Many streambanks in Tuggerah Lakes catchment are degraded and suffering from erosion. Restoring them with riparian vegetation stabilises the soil helping to prevent erosion. Riparian plants also slow the flow of water which is particularly important during flooding when water flows faster and is most likely to cause damage to streambanks.

Plants improve water quality

Riparian vegetation acts as a filter, helping collect sediments and other substances before it enters the waterways. Without riparian vegetation, large volumes of phosphorous, nitrogen sediment and other pollutants would end up in our waterways and ultimately our lakes.



Streambank plants also provide shade, reducing water temperature and helping to minimise the growth of unwanted aquatic plants and algae.





Streambank biodiversity

Riparian zones are habitat for aquatic, semiaquatic and land animals, such as frogs and lizards, providing food, shelter and shade. The Tuggerah Lakes catchment is also home to yabbies, platypus and turtles. Streambanks allow animals to move between land and water as well as safely migrate upstream and downstream along the waterway.

In a healthy riparian zone ecosystem, the plant community supports a balanced diversity of animals, while pest insect populations such as mosquitoes are kept in check by the presence of numerous bird species.

Wyong Shire Council has been restoring streambanks within Tuggerah Lakes catchment. Approximately 28 kilometres of riparian zone along Spring and Ourimbah creeks and Wyong Rivers have been rehabilitated under the Australian Government's Caring for our Country initiative with the aim of improving the overall health and water quality of the Tuggerah Lakes catchment.

did you know...

Our streams and rivers are the lifeblood of our lakes. They deliver the essential flushes of fresh water which revitalise our lake system. If we don't look after our streambanks the flows are full of sediment and nutrients and add to pollution problems in the lakes rather than refreshing them.

How you can help

- Plant banks with riparian vegetation.
- Keep stock away from streambanks.
- Reduce the use of fertiliser or plant native plants that require none.
- Join a local Landcare group.
- Install a rainwater tank to reduce water run-off entering stormwater.
- Avoid creating wash when boating through creeks as this causes erosion.
- Launch boats from public boat ramps only.
- Deposit garden waste and grass clippings in compost or your green waste bins.
- Take your litter away with you when enjoying our natural areas.
- Pick up pet poo and put it in the bin.

For more information about Tuggerah Lakes estuary go to www.loveourlivinglakes.com.au

Images above, left to right: Planting rehabilitation of riparian zone – Cedar Brush Creek, Yarramalong valley; Heavily eroded streambank – Tumbi Creek; Restored Streambank – Ourimbah Creek; Healthy streambank – Wyong River.



This project is supported by Wyong Shire Council, through funding from the Australian Government's Caring for our Country initiative.



CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY



Wyong Shire Council CENTRAL COAST