

Plains Grassy Wetland

Endangered in the Goulburn Broken Catchment

97% of Plains Grassy Wetlands have been cleared. 92% of that remains is on private land.



Figure 1. A healthy example of Plains Grassy Wetland.

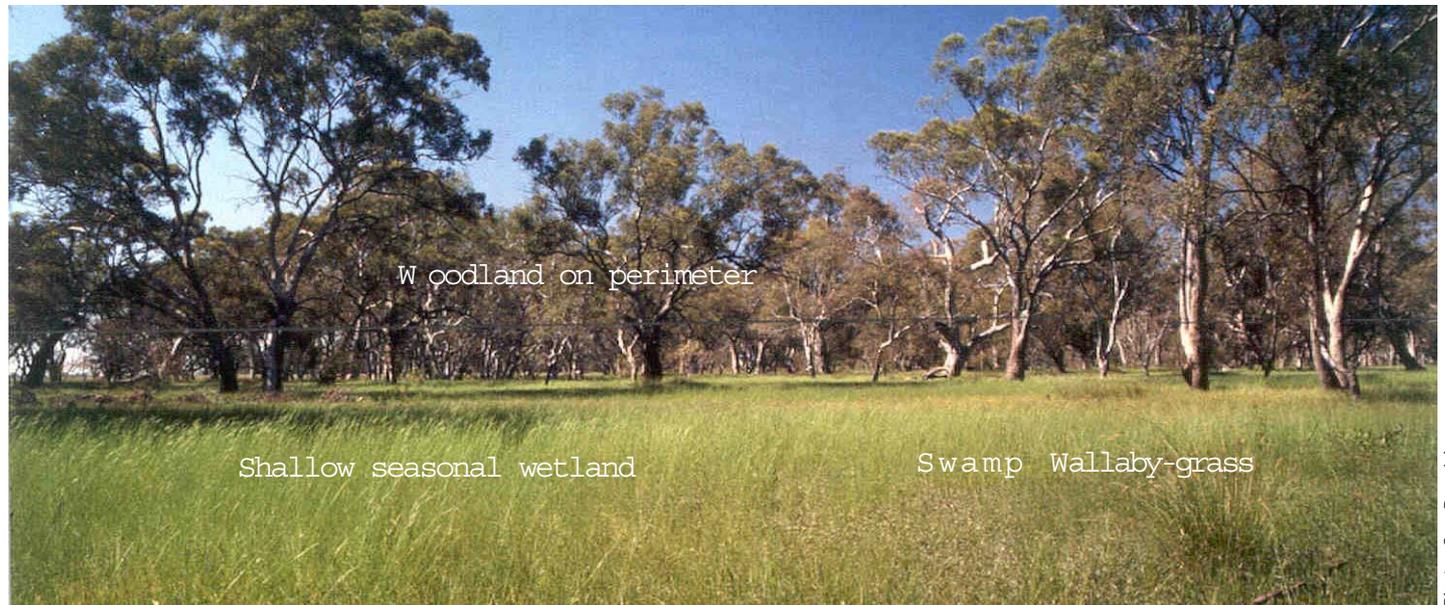


Figure 2. A healthy example of Plains Grassy Wetland.



Figure 3. A healthy example of Plains Grassy Wetland in summer.

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Description

These shallow seasonal wetlands occur on discrete, shallow depressions or in a mosaic with other wetlands such as Red Gum Wetlands. The heavy clay soils are periodically wet for a number of months and are dry throughout summer. They often occur amongst Plains Woodlands and Plains Grassy Woodlands.

The grassland structure of these wetlands can grade into sedgelands or herblands. The herbs and grasses flourish in the seasonally inundated conditions with very few true aquatic species.

Grass species include Common Swamp Wallaby-grass, Brown-back Wallaby-grass, Rigid Panic and Forbe Poa. Herbs include Billy Buttons, Rough Raspwort, Hairy Willow-herb, River Bluebell, and Swamp Daisy. Aquatics include Common Nardoo, Pacific Azolla, Common Spike-sedge and various Milfoil species. Rushes and sedges include Rush Sedge, Yellow Rush and Toad Rush.

Species To Look Out For

Flora: Stiff Groundsel (Ee), Cane Grass (v), Water Starwort (v) and Ridged Water-Milfoil (Vv).

Fauna: Brolga (v), Australasian Bittern (e), Great Egret (v), Musk Duck (v), Nankeen Night Heron (n).



Figure 4. Brolga
Photo: DSE/McCann



Figure 5. Australasian Bittern
Photo: DSE/Peter Menkhorst



Figure 6. Musk Duck
Photo: DSE/McCann



Figures 7-10.
Common Swamp Wallaby-grass, Rigid Panic, Billy-button, Common Nardoo

Photos 7 and 8, 9: Mary Titcumb, 10: Sally Timmins.

Why Plains Grassy Wetlands are Threatened

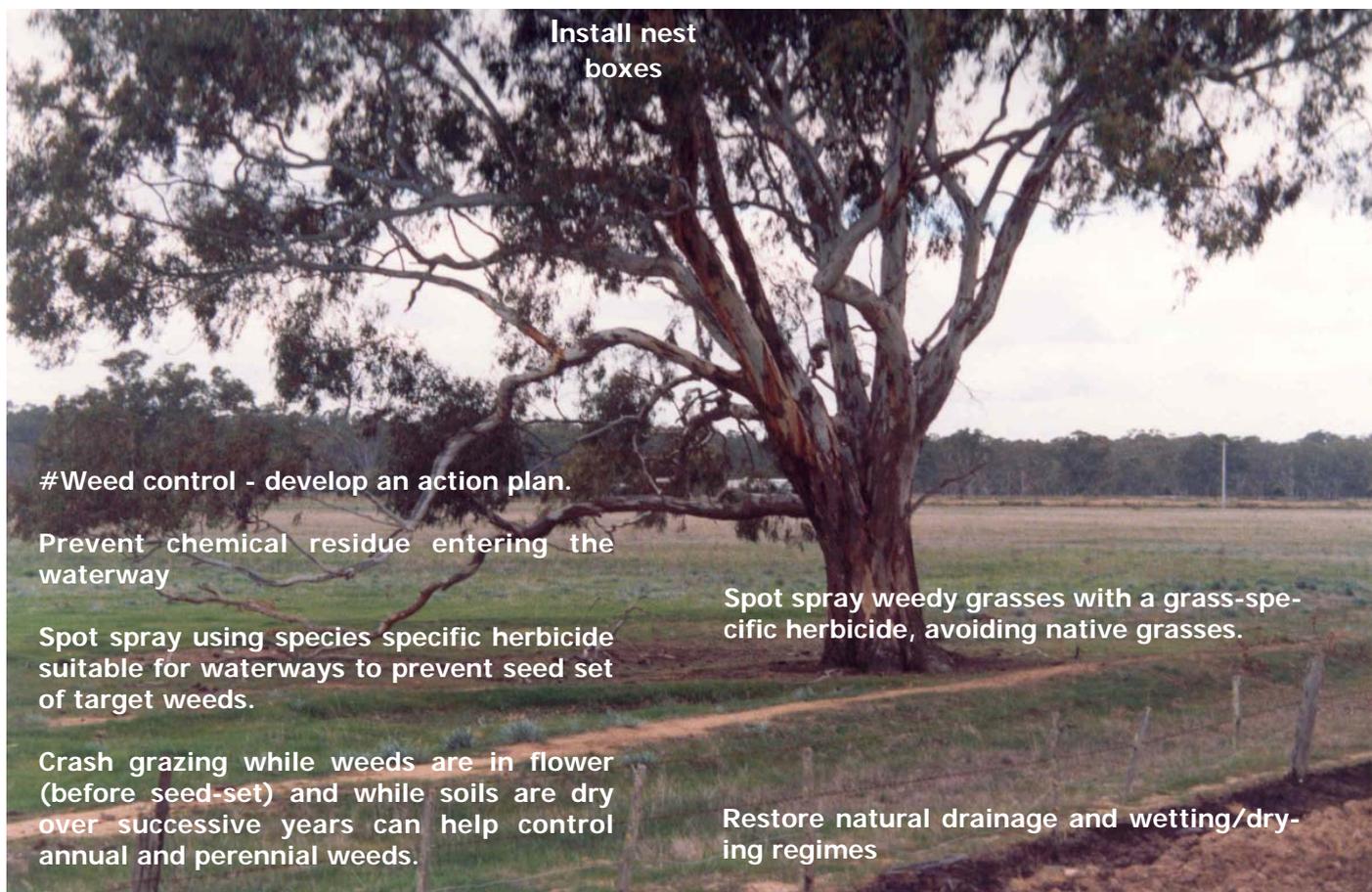
More than 97% of Plains Grassy Wetlands in the Goulburn Broken Catchment have disappeared since European settlement (247ha remain). Over 92% of what remains is on private land (230ha). Many of the plants and animals that rely on this habitat are now also threatened, and some are extinct. Therefore, the support of private landholders is essential for the ongoing conservation of Plains Grassy Wetlands.

Current threats include, **poor timing of stock grazing and overgrazing** (causing loss of native species through selective grazing and trampling, hinders native plant regeneration, disturbs the soil and increases nutrient levels), **tree planting in naturally treeless wetlands** (causing loss of important breeding habitat for many water birds, eg. Brolga, and alters the hydrology, and vegetation structure, hence threatening the entire system), **loss of ground habitat** (through dredging, land-filling, draining, unsustainable harvesting of Drumsticks or Billybuttons, and overgrazing), **weed invasion from adjacent areas**, soil disturbance, stock feed and stock faeces, **increased nutrients** (favours weeds and causes excessive plant growth which restricts water movement and reduces dissolved oxygen), **changes to natural flooding, temperature and flow regimes** changes floodplain functions, **difficulty in identifying wetlands** often results in inappropriate management.

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Management Tips



Install nest boxes

#Weed control - develop an action plan.

Prevent chemical residue entering the waterway

Spot spray using species specific herbicide suitable for waterways to prevent seed set of target weeds.

Crash grazing while weeds are in flower (before seed-set) and while soils are dry over successive years can help control annual and perennial weeds.

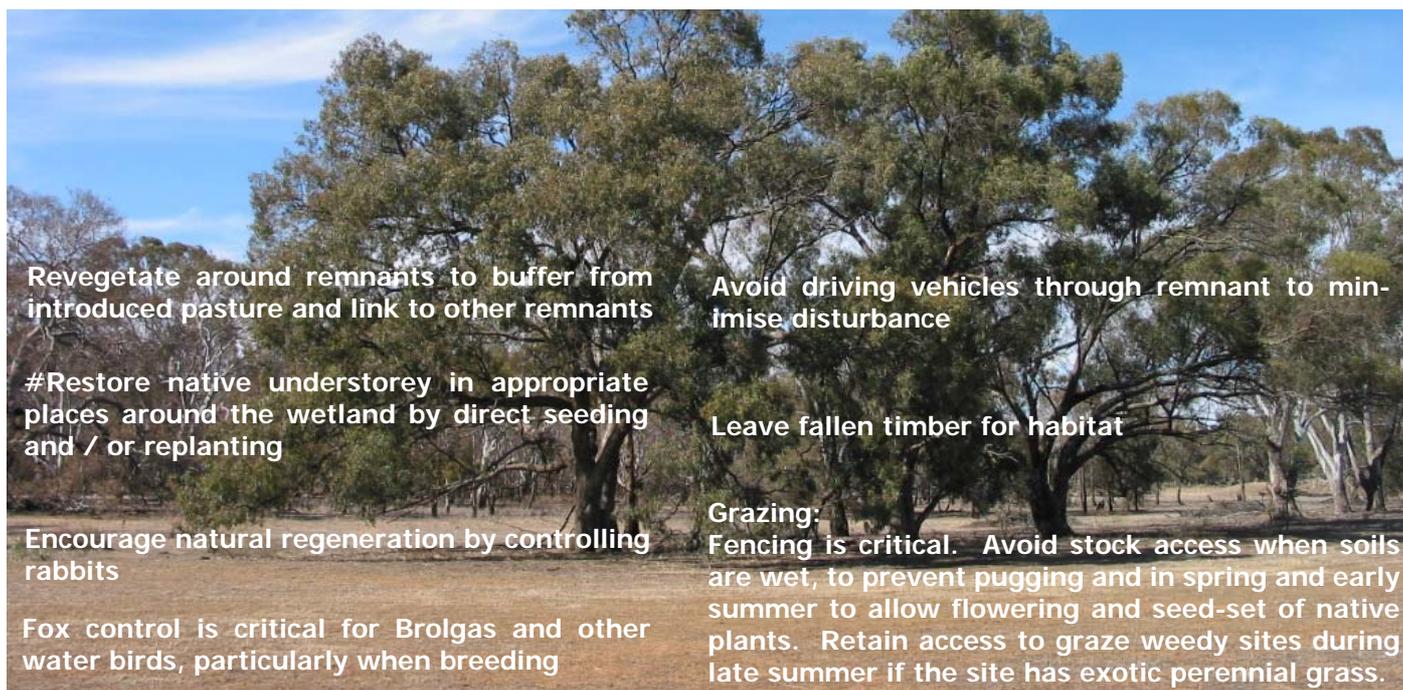
Spot spray weedy grasses with a grass-specific herbicide, avoiding native grasses.

Restore natural drainage and wetting/drying regimes

Photo: Mary Titcumb

Figure 11. An example of a Plains Grassy Wetland in moderate condition, with Billybuttons still present, but dominated by introduced grasses. The natural drainage is also disturbed, a drain can be seen in the right foreground. The photograph was taken in September.

May require expert input in decision making and planning. See your local DSE, DPI or CMA representative for further advice.



Revegetate around remnants to buffer from introduced pasture and link to other remnants

#Restore native understorey in appropriate places around the wetland by direct seeding and / or replanting

Encourage natural regeneration by controlling rabbits

Fox control is critical for Brolgas and other water birds, particularly when breeding

Avoid driving vehicles through remnant to minimise disturbance

Leave fallen timber for habitat

Grazing: Fencing is critical. Avoid stock access when soils are wet, to prevent pugging and in spring and early summer to allow flowering and seed-set of native plants. Retain access to graze weedy sites during late summer if the site has exotic perennial grass.

Photo: Debbie Colbourne

Figure 12. An example of Plains Grassy Wetland in December.

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Conservation Status

Plains Grassy Wetland is **Endangered** in the Goulburn Broken Catchment

- Victorian Riverina bioregion : **Endangered**
- Murray Fans bioregion: **Endangered**
- Goldfields bioregion : **Endangered**
- Central Victorian Uplands bioregion : **Endangered**
- Northern Inland Slopes bioregion : **Endangered**

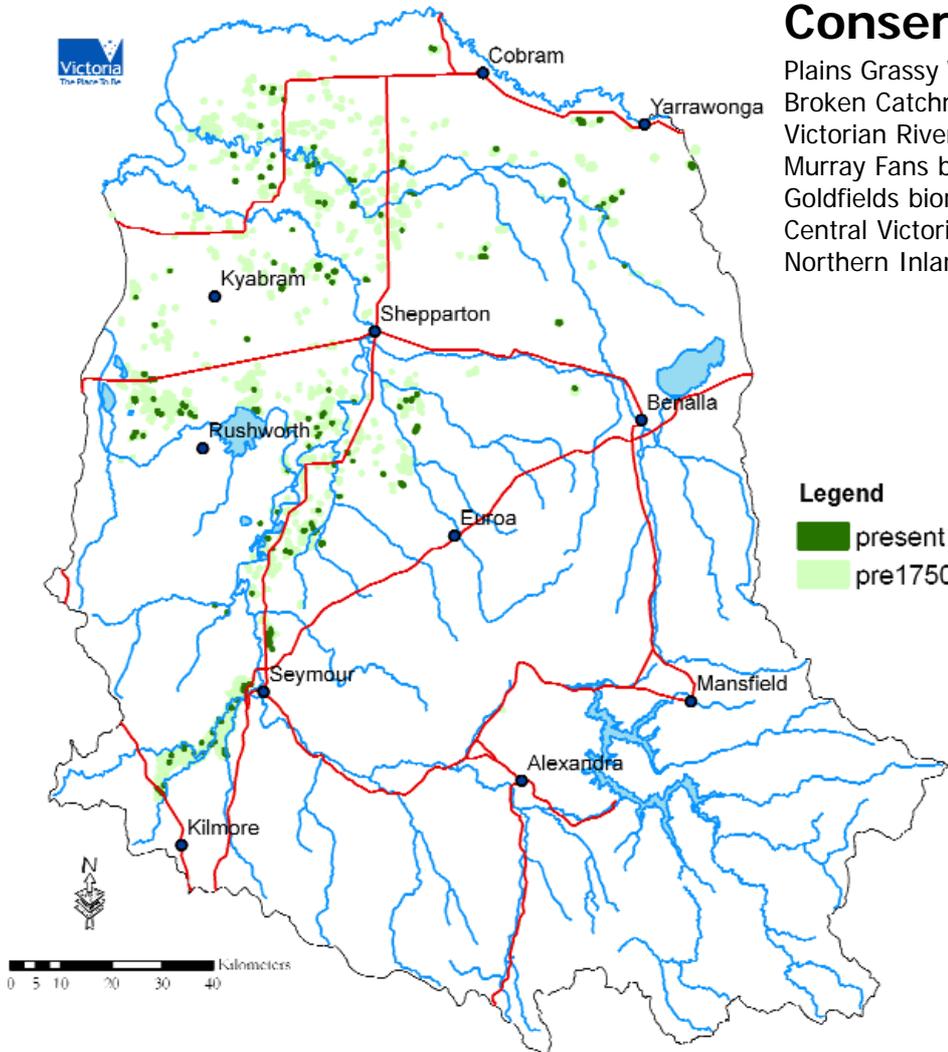


Figure 13. A representation of the pre-1750 and present day distribution of Plains Grassy Wetland and its mosaics and complexes in the Goulburn Broken Catchment. The boundaries of the vegetation have been exaggerated to allow for the small scale of the map. The map was produced from Base Data from DSE Corporate Library. The State of Victoria does not warrant the accuracy or completeness of information on this map. Any person using or relying upon such information does so on the basis that the State of Victoria shall bear no responsibility or liability whatsoever for any errors, faults, defects or omissions in the information.

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