

Cane Grass Wetlands

Threatened in the Goulburn Broken Catchment

100% of Cane Grass Wetlands have been cleared in the Goulburn Broken Catchment.

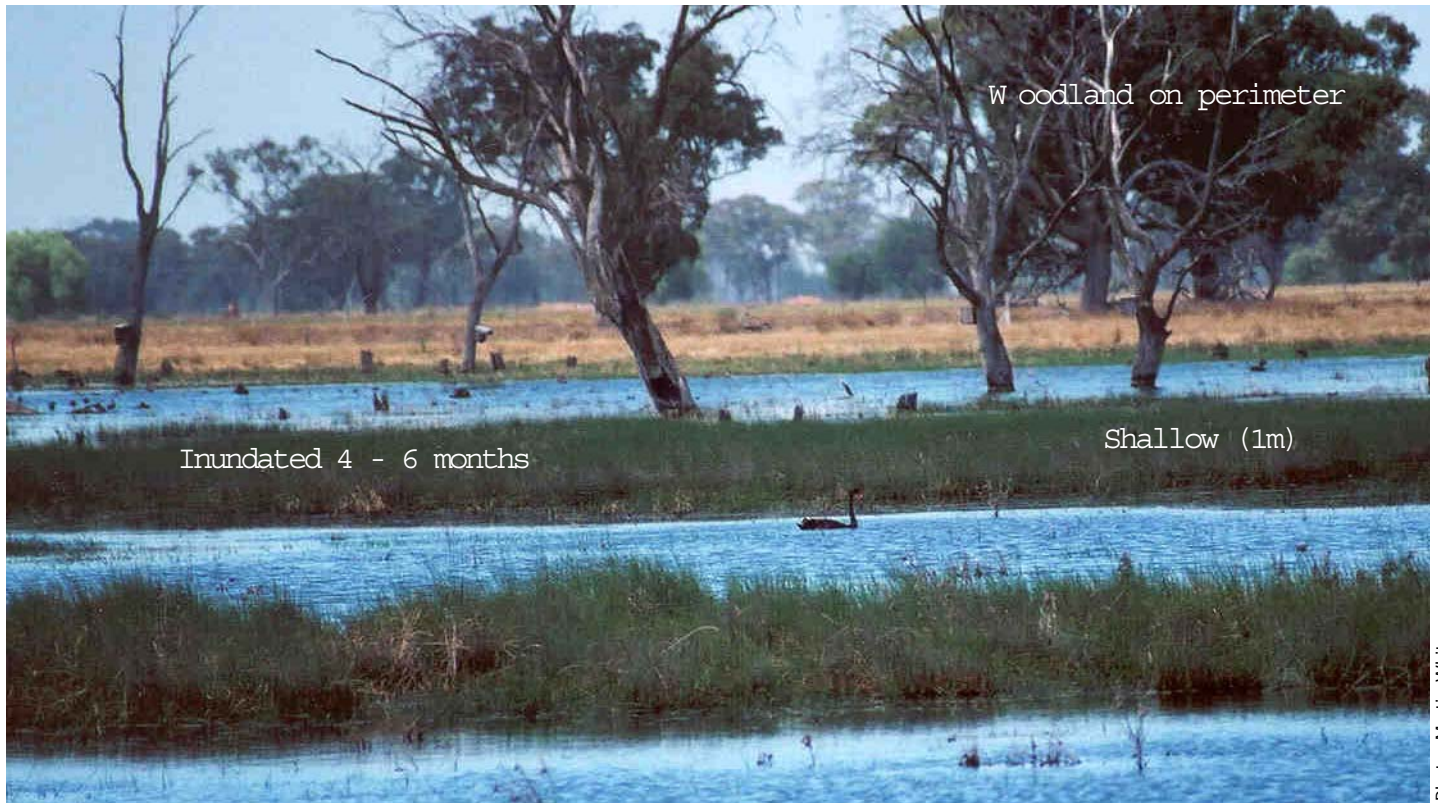


Photo: Martin White

Figure 1. A healthy example of a reconstructed Cane Grass Wetlands on private property with important diagnostic and habitat features highlighted.



Photo: Tony Kubel

Figure 2. An example of a Cane Grass Wetland at Tomlinsons Swamp.

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Description

These shallow wetlands (~1m in depth) remain inundated for approximately 4-6 months and occur on the alluvial plain in depressions with a clay soil base. These are open swamps or shallow freshwater marshes dominated by Cane Grass, and typically have low plant diversity and are dry for extended periods.

A woodland of River Red Gum and occasionally Grey Box, may occur on the perimeter of these wetlands, which may then grade into the more diverse Plains Grassy Woodland or Plains Woodland.

Cane Grass forms a dominant sward with sedges such as Spiny Flat-sedge and Common Spike-sedge.

Common aquatic plants include Upright Milfoil, Red Milfoil and Floating Pondweed.

Species To Look Out For

Flora: Cane Grass (v), Dookie Daisy (v).

Fauna: Brolga (v) and Egrets (v), Hardhead (v), Whistling Kite, Swamp Harrier, Black Swan.



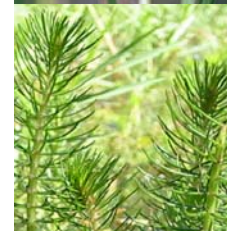
Figure 3. Brolga
Photo: DSE/McCann



Figure 4. Hardhead
Photo: DSE/McCann



Figure 5. Black Swan
Photo: DSE/McCann



Figures 6-9. Cane Grass, Cane Grass, Common Spike-sedge and Upright Water-milfoil.

Photos: 6-8 Mary Titcumb; 9 Keith Ward

Why Cane Grass Wetlands are Threatened

Cane Grass Wetlands are listed as extinct, however observation suggests that this may be due to inadequate mapping, and those that remain are highly modified. They are certainly rare, and any that are intact are precious. Many of the plants and animals that rely on this habitat are now also threatened, and some are extinct. The support of private landholders is essential for the ongoing conservation and restoration of Cane Grass Wetlands.

Current threats include, **poor timing of stock grazing and overgrazing** (causes loss of native species through selective grazing and trampling, hinders native plant regeneration, disturbs the soil and increases nutrient levels), **increases in nutrients** (favours weeds, causes excessive plant growth which restricts water movement and reduces dissolved oxygen), **alteration of natural flooding, flow and temperature regimes** (changes floodplain functions, and can result in loss of native species, it disrupts the delicate balance of the system, threatening the viability of the remnant), **difficulty in identifying wetlands** (often results in inappropriate management such as tree planting and grazing at inappropriate times of the year), **isolation** (restricted movement of fauna, difficult to maintain healthy gene pool), lack of natural **regeneration, soil disturbance** (eg. ploughing and pugging, favouring weed species), **weed invasion, pest animals** and loss of **tree and ground habitat** (through timber harvesting, tidying-up of fallen timber and firewood collection).

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Management Tips

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

#Weed control - develop an action plan.

Spot spray using species specific herbicide suitable for waterways to prevent seed set of target weeds (commonly Phalaris and Paspalum).

Preclude chemical residue entering any waterbodies.

#Mosaic or patch burning weedy, open areas in early summer immediately following exotic grass seed set (many are too green to burn in spring), could be an option.

Soon after fire spot spray weedy grasses (commonly Phalaris) with a grass-specific herbicide, avoiding native plants.

To prevent pugging, exclude grazing when soil is wet and allow flowering and seed-set of natives.

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

Leave fallen timber for habitat

Restore natural drainage and wetting/drying regimes

Avoid driving vehicles through remnant to minimise disturbance

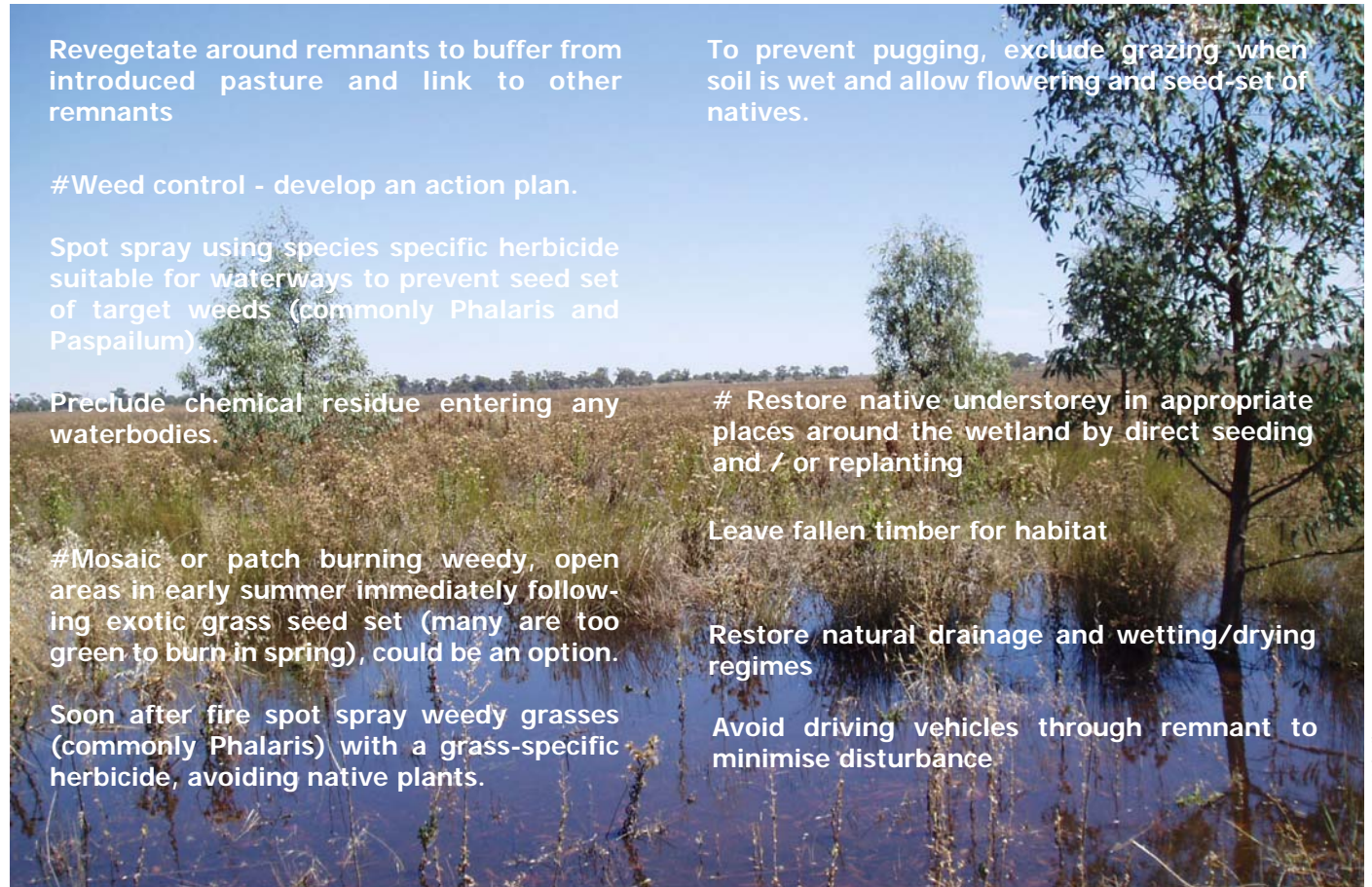


Photo: Tony Kubell

Figure 10. An example of Cane Grass Wetland at Moodies Swamp, heavily infested with thistles, Phalaris and other weeds.

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

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 when dry to prevent seed-set of weeds.

Encourage natural regeneration by controlling rabbits

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

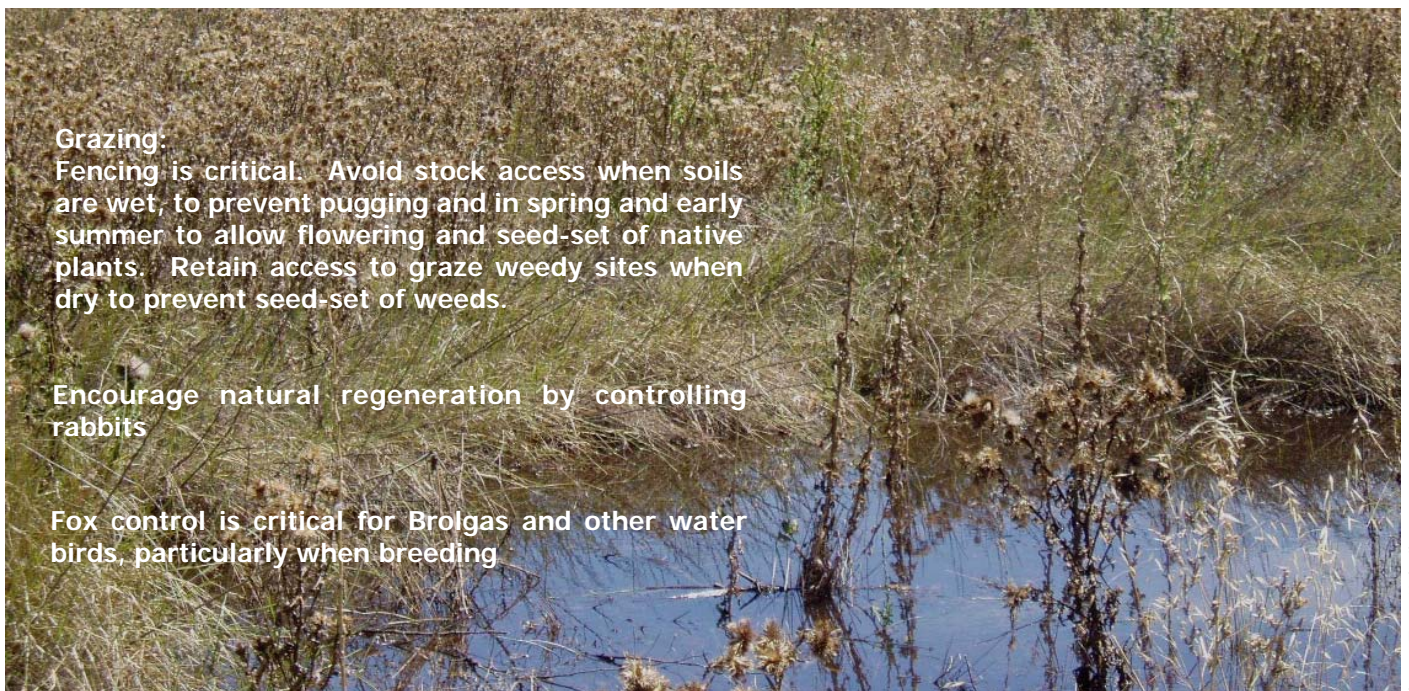


Photo: Tony Kubell

Figure 11. Another example of Cane Grass Wetland in poor condition in parts of Moodies Swamp.

Conservation Status


Cane Grass Wetlands is **threatened** in the Goulburn Broken Catchment

Victorian Riverina bioregion : **Extinct**

Northern Inland Slopes bioregion : **Extinct**

Cane Grass Wetlands are listed as extinct, however observation suggests that this may be due to inadequate mapping. Those that remain, are highly modified.

Legend

 pre1750

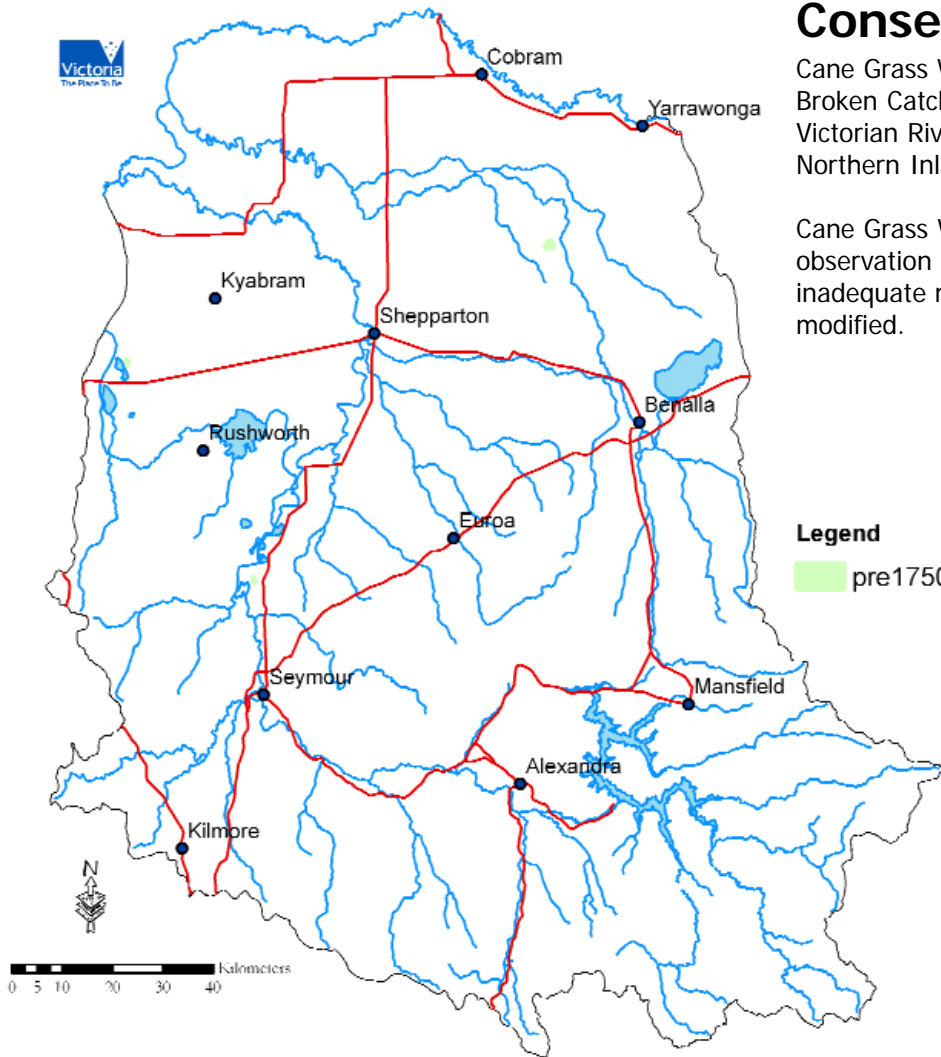



Figure 12. A representation of the pre-1750 and present day distribution of Cane Grass Wetlands and its mosaics and complexes in the Goulburn Broken Catchment. The boundaries of the vegetation have been exaggerated to allow for the small scale of the map. The map was produced from Base Data from DSE 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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