

# Plains Grassy Wetland

Wetlands are **ENDANGERED** in the Goulburn Broken Catchment

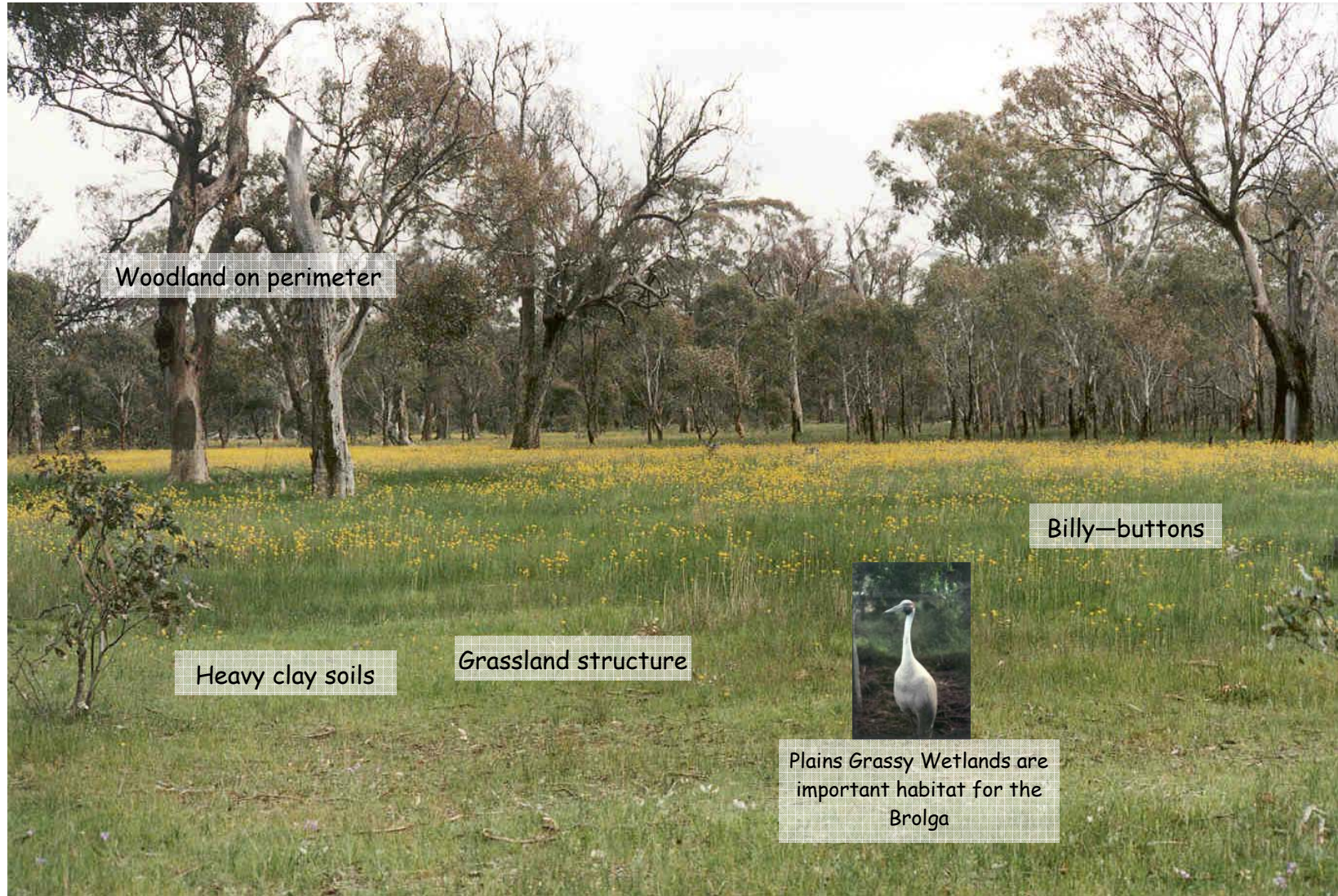


Photo: Martin White; Inset Photo: Glen Johnson

Figure 1 An example of a Plains Grassy Wetland with billy—buttons (not always present) in healthy condition, with important diagnostic and habitat features noted.

# Plains Grassy Wetland

Wetlands are **ENDANGERED** in the Goulburn Broken Catchment

3% of this vegetation type remains uncleared, 93% (230ha) of which is on private land.

Wetlands may not be diverse in plant species, but they are enormously important for habitat diversity across the landscape, and habitat diversity within the wetland between seasons (wetting and drying stages) and thus a rich diversity of fauna is supported.

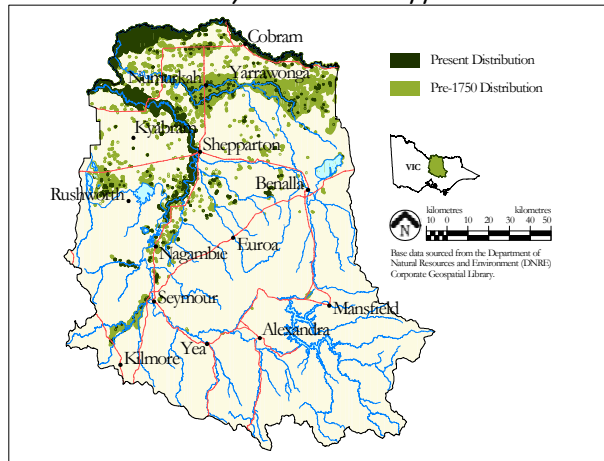


Figure 2 Distribution of Wetlands in the Goulburn Broken Catchment.

## Current Threats

- Inappropriate **grazing regimes**, cause loss of native species (through selective grazing and trampling), hinder native plant regeneration, disturb the soil and increase nutrient levels.
- **Tree planting** in naturally treeless wetlands causes 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), threatens the structure and viability of remnants and associated fauna.
- **Weed invasion** from adjacent areas, soil disturbance, stock feed and stock faeces, threatens native plant species and therefore the structure and health of remnants.
- **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. It can result in loss of native species and disrupts the delicate balance of the system, threatening the viability of the remnant.
- **Difficulty in identifying** wetlands often results in inappropriate management.

## Description

These **shallow seasonal wetlands** are typically treeless, occurring on the alluvial plain at an annual rainfall of less than 700mm. They 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. The grassland structure of these wetlands can grade into sedgelands or herblands, with herbs and grasses which flourish in the seasonally inundated conditions and very few true aquatic species. **Grass species** include Veined Swamp Wallaby-grass, Brown-back Wallaby-grass, Rigid Panic and Forbe Poa. **Herbs** include Drumsticks (or 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.

## Significant Species

**Flora:** Stiff Groundsel, Barren Cane Grass, Water Starwort and Ridged Milfoil.

**Fauna:** Brolga.

## Management Tips

Management which **maintains** and **enhances** the remnant vegetation / habitat, including:

- **Fence** sites to exclude grazing, particularly **when wet**, as soil is prone to **pugging**, and to **allow flowering and seed-set** of native plants. **Graze** weedy sites **when dry** to prevent seed-set of weeds.
- **Control** weeds and pest animals.
- Encourage **natural regeneration**.
- **Revegetate** areas to buffer remnants from pasture. Establish woodlands with shrubs around the edge to enhance habitat and link to other remnants.
- **Monitor** your site and **adapt management practices** as required (help is available to assist and set up monitoring).