

Cane Grass Wetland

ENDANGERED in the Goulburn Broken Catchment

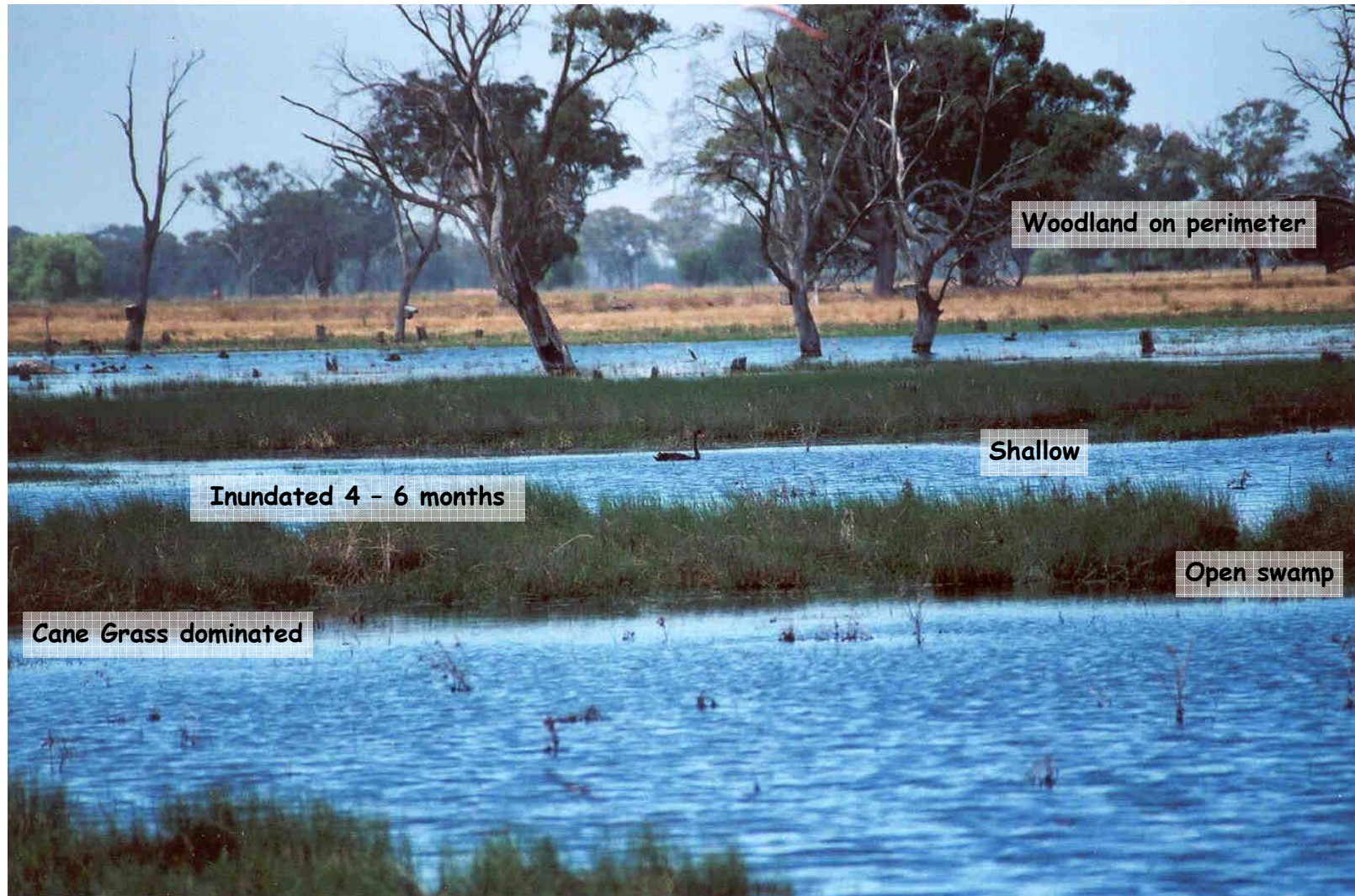


Photo: Martin White

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

Cane Grass Wetland

ENDANGERED in the Goulburn Broken Catchment

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 hence a rich diversity of fauna is supported.

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. 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 Wetland or Plains Grassy Woodland. Barren Cane Grass forms a dominant sward with sedges such as Spiny Flat-sedge and Common Spike-sedge. Common aquatic include Upright Milfoil, Red Milfoil and Floating Pondweed.

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 structure, threatening the entire system.
- Loss of ground habitat through dredging, land-filling, draining and overgrazing, threatens the structure and viability of remnants and associated fauna.
- Weed invasion threatens native plant species and therefore the delicate balance of the system.
- 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.

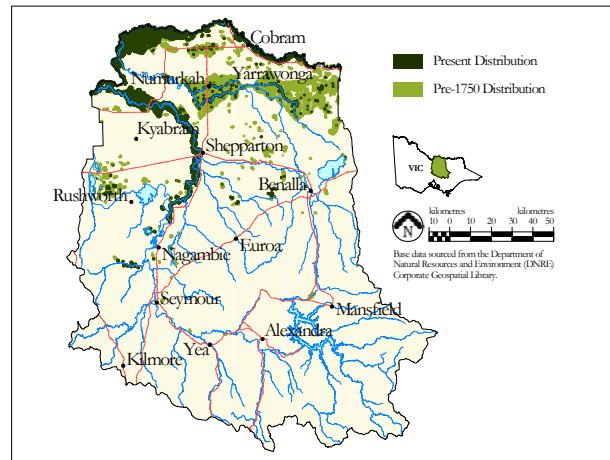


Figure 2 Distribution of Wetland Complexes in the Goulburn Broken Catchment.

Significant Species

Flora: Barren Cane Grass.

Fauna: Brolga and Egrets.

Management Tips

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

- Maintain, or restore, natural flooding regimes.
- Fence sites from grazing and exclude stock when the soil is wet (as soil is prone to pugging) and allow flowering and seed set of native plants. Retain access for controlled grazing during late summer if the site has exotic perennial grasses.
- Develop and implement a plan to control weeds and pest animals.
- Fox control is critical for Brolgas and other water birds, particularly when breeding.
- Encourage natural regeneration by restricting grazing.
- Revegetate around remnants to buffer from pasture, using local natural wetlands as a guide for what to plant.
- Fire may be used to remove dense above-ground vegetation from an area of wetland for revegetation purposes.
- Avoid use of chemicals and fertilisers close to wetlands.
- Monitor your site and adapt management practices as required (help is available to assist with monitoring).