Red Gum Wetland

ENDANGERED in the Goulburn Broken Catchment

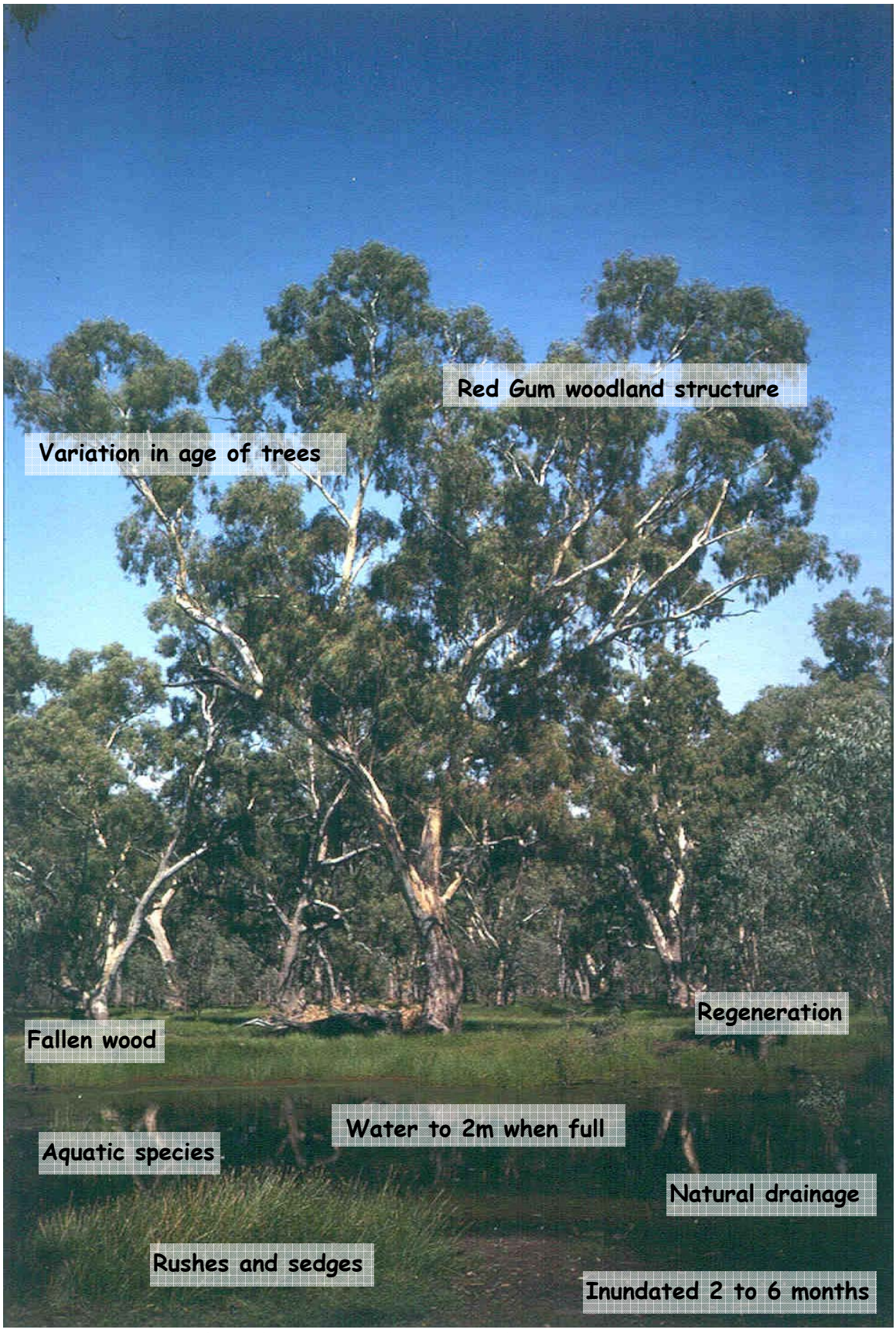

Photo: Keith Ward

Figure 1 An example of a Red Gum Wetland in good condition, with important diagnostic and habitat features noted.

Natural Heritage Trust
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Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority

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18% of this vegetation type remains uncleared, 48% (479ha) 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 hence a rich diversity of fauna is supported.

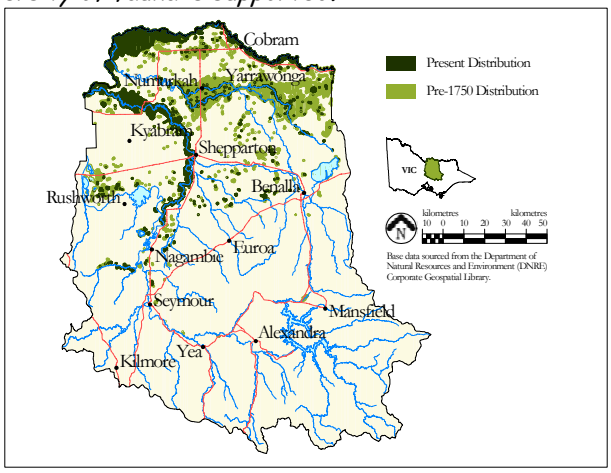

Figure 2 Distribution of Red Gum Wetlands in the Goulburn Broken Catchment.

Significant Species

Flora: Water—shield.

Fauna: Royal Spoonbill and breeding sites for water birds including Ibis.

Current Threats

- 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.
- Inappropriate grazing regimes cause loss of native species (through selective grazing and trampling), hinder native plant regeneration, disturbe 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 viability of the remnant.
- Increases in nutrients favours weeds and causes excessive plant growth which restricts water movement and reduces dissolved oxygen.

Description

These shallow wetlands occur on the alluvial plain in deeper depressions of shallow drainage lines or prior stream meanders, where annual rainfall is generally less than 700mm. Inundation occurs when there is sufficient run—off to create a flow along these depressions. Inundation may last 2 to 6 months, and the wetlands may be dry at the start of winter. Typically, the woodland overstorey of River Red Gum, has a species—poor sedgeland or herbaceous aquatic dominated understorey. Floristic composition varies according to water depth and time of year. Aquatic species include Narrow—leaf and Common Nardoo, Pacific Azolla, Common and Tall Spike—sedge, Floating Pondweed and Water—ribbons. As the wetland dries, a range of grasses and herbs grow, including Common Blown Grass, Tufted Burr—daisy, Couch, Poison Lobelia and Austral Brooklime. Rushs include: Hollow Rush, Joint—leaf Rush and Finger Rush. Associated species may include Cumbungi and Common Reed.

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 soil is wet (as it 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 and link to other remnants.
- Monitor your site and adapt management practices as required (help is available to assist with monitoring).

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