

Riparian Corridors – vegetation along the way

The riparian zone is dominated by coolibahs. It is a narrow vegetated corridor sometimes only the width of a coolibah tree.



Channel Country wetlands, including Goyder Lagoon, provide important stopover habitat for migrating shorebirds, including endangered species such as the Curlew Sandpiper. Over 20 species of migratory shorebirds, protected under international agreements, have been recorded in the wetlands of the far north-east of South Australia.

Lignum (Duma florulenta) This bush of thin, intertwined and tangled branches that forms dense thickets is one of the most ecologically significant shrubs in arid river systems and floodplain environments. It is very widespread, growing in thick bands along the main river channels, streams and creek lines (where it stabilises and protects the soft banks) and on cracking or heavy clay floodplains prone to periodic inundation.



The suckering habit of the **Whitewood (Atalaya hemiglauca)** allows it to establish stands under existing trees, but you won't find it growing beyond the Andrewilla Waterhole.



Goyder Lagoon: A powerhouse engine room for the continent's waterbirds

Part of the low-lying Diamantina River floodplain, Goyder Lagoon is a vast uncontained, ephemeral swamp covering 1,300 sq. km that catches floodwaters as they move down the Diamantina channel. It is a myriad of shallow, braided micro-channels and associated cracking clays dominated by lignum.

"In big flood years Goyder Lagoon can support half a million waterbirds across 70 species with high levels of breeding"

Soil and Groundwater Salinity

The number of perennial trees growing along watercourses changes with increasing salinity. Many do not grow in the increasingly salty water as watercourses approach their destination in Kati Thanda–Lake Eyre.



Queensland Bean Tree (Bauhinia gilva)

These distinctive, long-living trees grow near freshwater creeks and rivers, along the top of channel banks and also as isolated individuals beyond fringing coolibah woodland. The trees produce large numbers of seed pods; its leaves are shaped like butterfly wings and the trunks exude an edible, toffee-like resin. Bean trees are good for soil fertility because they produce large amounts of plant litter of fallen leaves, branches and seed pods providing valuable nutrients and habitat for a range of fauna. The decomposition of this litter recycles nutrients that enhances soil fertility and improves the absorption and retention of moisture. Removing plant litter, firewood collection and cattle trampling destroys habitat and inhibits nutrient cycling impacting negatively on the recruitment of bean trees and other plant species.

During dry spells lignum appears dead. After flooding it springs back to life becoming breeding havens for waterbirds like purple swamphens, freckled ducks, egrets, and straw-necked ibis that build their nests on top of, and among, these bushes.



Broughton Willow (Acacia salicina) Birds and native bees love its nectar. It provides shelter and habitat for a range of fauna and birds.



Old Man Salt Bush (Atriplex nummularia) The largest of Australian saltbushes.



Aboriginal people, using their large flat grinding stones, ground **nardoo** seeds into flour from which they made 'cakes'.

Early explorers Burke and Wills tried, unsuccessfully, to survive on nardoo but, without traditional knowledge, prepared it incorrectly ... They both died from exhaustion and malnutrition in June 1861 ...

The majestic coolibahs grow on the banks of creeks and rivers and play a major role in supporting life throughout the entire Diamantina River system. Structurally, they are large and long-lived trees that provide a myriad of habitats from roots to branches for a wide range of organisms. Discarded limbs and branches fall directly into the nearby water and provide habitat for a range of aquatic fauna.



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