

Riverine Corridors – desert bird ways and floodplain food chains

When floodwaters turn the desert into an oasis, thousands of waterbirds take advantage of the good conditions to breed and feed on the flush of fish streaming down the rivers filling lakes, channels and floodplains.



Diving birds

Cormorants and pelicans arrive; egrets and herons move in and forage on the floodplain for insects and frogs.

Nectar feeders are prolific and feed off the flourishing flowering plants.



Night owls and boobooks feed on small nocturnal animals and bats radar in to feed on flying insects.



Alton Downs Homestead

Andrewilla Waterhole

Yammakira Waterhole

Koonchera Waterhole

GOYDER LAGOON

Clifton Downs Homestead

STURT'S STONY DESERT



Nomadic seed-eating budgerigars and finches arrive in huge flocks to take advantage of vast spreads of abundant native grasses – before the dry returns.

Raptors patrol the skies over breeding colonies looking for vulnerable chicks.



What do birds eat?

Look at the shape of the bills – some are very odd indeed. But they tell you a lot about their feeding habits. Coots feed almost entirely on plants by plucking them from the water or grazing along the shore.

Dotterels probing the mud for aquatic insects, larvae and seeds.



Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre

The flush of new plant growth triggers an insect population boom attracting large numbers of nomadic insect-eating birds. Most of these move on when drought returns.

Ibises probe the shallows for invertebrates, frogs and small reptiles.



Purple swamphens wander about on the edges of water eating soft shoots of reeds and small animals such as frogs and snails.



Shovelers' bills have special grooves along the edges that filter insects, crustaceans and a variety of plants.



Grey Grasswrens occur on floodplains of the Bulloo, Cooper and Diamantina, in Lignum and other less frequently inundated shrublands. The subspecies, *Amytornis barbatus diamantina*, seen here in Lignum, is largely confined to Goyder Lagoon and the upper Warburton.

Mungerannie Homestead
Mungerannie Hotel



When the Diamantina floods, thousands of waterbirds arrive to breed in the wetlands, at Goyder Lagoon, the rivers and submerged floodplains.

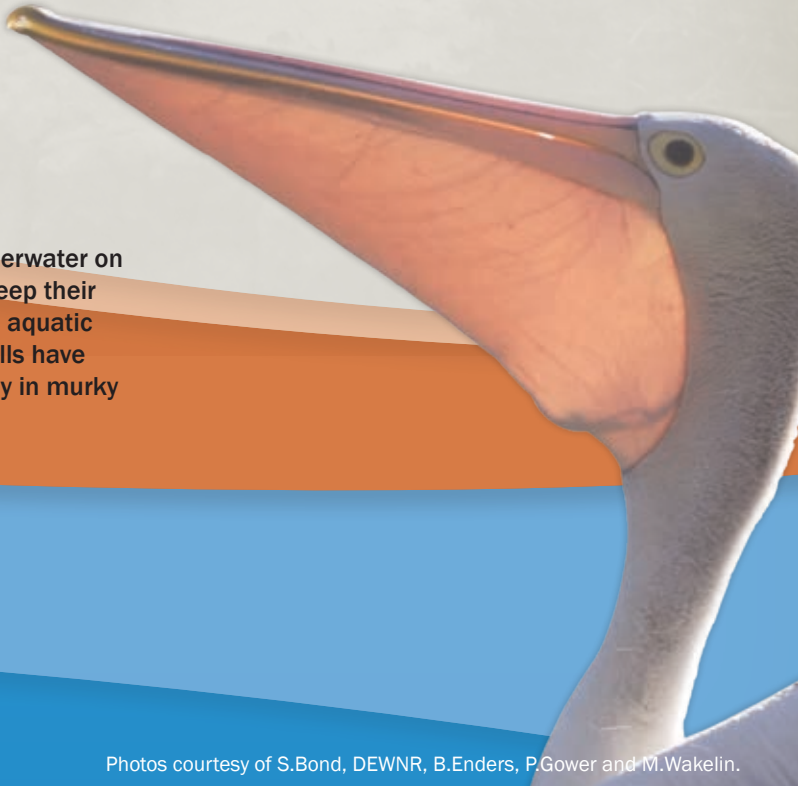
Pelicans lead the way, travelling for thousands of kilometres alerted by natural triggers – risky yes, but rarely wrong.

They are followed by mid-size waterbirds – herons and spoonbills. Soon, smaller waterbirds arrive. Grebes, stilts and ducks fly into feeding grounds searching out fish and invertebrates – crustaceans, molluscs and insect larvae.

Clayton Homestead



Spoonbills and egrets graze underwater on plants and algae. Spoonbills sweep their heads from side to side to catch aquatic insects and their larvae. Their bills have vibration detectors which can pry in murky water day or night.



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Photos courtesy of S.Bond, DEWNR, B.Enders, P.Gower and M.Wakelin.