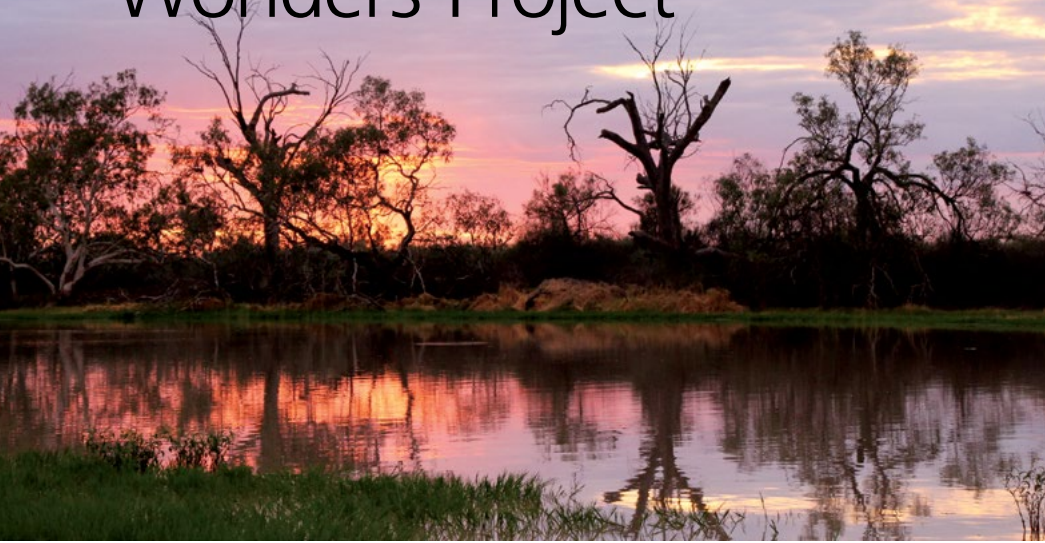


The Coongie Wetland Wonders Project

Natural Resources
SA Arid Lands

FACT SHEET
Coongie Lakes Ramsar
Wetlands



Cooper Creek dunefields and floodplains

THE COONGIE RAMSAR WETLANDS

The Coongie Ramsar Wetlands site is situated in the north-east of South Australia, and is listed as a 'wetland of international importance' through an international agreement, signed by the Australian Government. The agreement protects the wetlands and associated natural values of an area that encompasses most of the wetlands associated with the Cooper Creek in South Australia.

The area is listed for its outstanding ecological processes, status as an unregulated natural water system, and its migratory birds, waterfowl and fish diversity. The area supports dryland dune field and gibber plain habitats also known to support threatened species listed under Federal and State environmental legislation.

The Coongie Ramsar site supports:

- Six nationally threatened species of conservation significance within the Malkumba-Coongie Lakes Ramsar site. These are the wetland-dependent and nationally endangered Australian Painted Snipe, Curlew Sandpiper plus the terrestrial Dusky Hopping-mouse, Plains Mouse, Kowari, Crest-tailed Mulgara (*Ampurta*) and potentially the Night Parrot.
- A variety of Ramsar wetland types, land systems and vegetation communities that are characteristic of the bioregion.
- A significant number of migratory species including 18 listed under international migratory bird agreements, 17 of which are also recognized under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. In addition, the site supports the substantial breeding of waterbirds, with 55 species having been recorded breeding at the site since listing. The area provides breeding habitat and drought refuge for many species of waterbird and fish because water from the upper Cooper reaches the upstream region most years and Lake Coongie is rarely dry.
- 55 of the 83 species of waterbird recorded as breeding in the area regularly exceed 20,000 in number during major flood events.
- More than one percent of the worldwide population of two species: Pink-eared Duck and Red-necked Avocet.
- 13 species of native fish which breed and migrate within the site.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A RAMSAR WETLAND

The Ramsar Wetlands agreement is part of the Ramsar Convention – an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. It was adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971 and came into force in 1975. Since then, almost 90 per cent of UN member states have signed up with 2331 sites internationally covering 249,591,447 hectares. In Australia there are 66 sites covering 8,307,329 hectares – more than two million of which is at Malkumba-Coongie Lakes National Park.

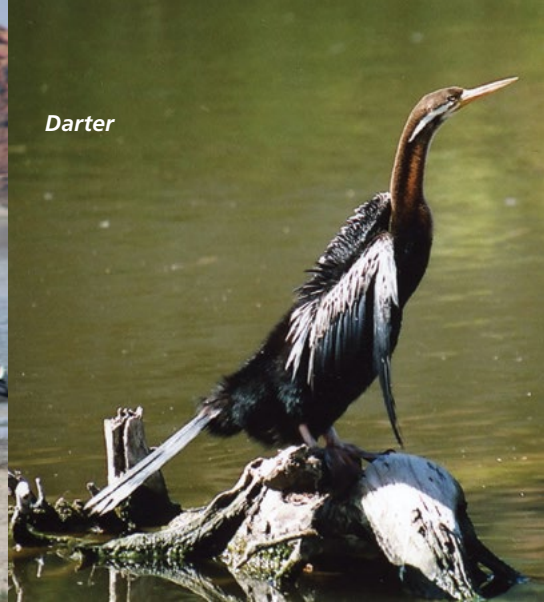


Brolgas at Coongie Lakes

Pelicans at Coongie Lakes



Darter



THE COONGIE WETLAND WONDERS PROJECT

The South Australian Arid Lands (SAAL) NRM Board has successfully tendered for funding under the Australian Government’s National Landcare Program to deliver a project aimed at maintaining the values and improving the ecological function of the Coongie Lakes Ramsar wetlands.

To protect and maintain the Coongie Ramsar values, it is critical to manage threats from land uses and development that are incompatible with the Ramsar listing because they could alter water flows and cause downstream pollution. Interstate and cross-regional agreements and planning processes are the main mechanism for maintaining the unregulated nature of the catchment.

Other threats to the ecological integrity of the system that supports the fish, birds and other species of conservation significance include invasive species such as feral pigs and other feral herbivores, livestock and weeds, all of which have the capacity to alter the structure and function of wetland communities.

THE WORK

The funding received for this project will enable the SAAL NRM Board to:

- Assess the extent and significance of impacts from exploration track and infrastructure development on surface flows and vegetation.
- Work to control pest animals focussing on pigs and large feral herbivores.
- Remove priority pest weeds, such as Mimosa Bush and Buffel Grass, with a focus on new strategic invasions to minimise further spread.
- Assess the impacts of pest species and other activities on the natural systems and the effectiveness of management activities.
- Improve our understanding of the extent and condition of the region’s natural values.
- Support a strategic adaptive management approach through the Lake Eyre Basin Partnership.

Landscape-scale aerial control of large feral animals will reduce the potential impact to the productivity and structure of vegetation and impacts on breeding waterbirds, while maintaining the integrity of significant waterholes, lakes and ecological communities.

Reduced total grazing pressure as well as pig digging or trampling will also benefit numerous native plants and animals in the area, many of which are threatened species.

An initial survey will be carried out to traverse the Coongie Ramsar wetland area and adjacent dunefields to establish baselines for pig and large feral herbivore activity and impacts, presence and activity levels of Dusky Hopping-mice and Ampurta, and activity of predators (dingoes, foxes and cats). Motion cameras will be used to detect medium and large fauna, as well as sound recorders for frog and night parrot detection. Further surveys will be carried out in 2019 to ground-truth infrastructure impact on water flows and vegetation, as well as general biological surveys and fish surveys.

SAAL will collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders including pastoralists, traditional owners, mining operators, conservationists, scientists, community groups and other government staff to carry out this project so that the Coongie Ramsar wetland values can be protected and maintained into the future.



Lake Eyre Golden Perch



Ampurta or Crest-tailed Mulgara



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Government of South Australia
South Australian Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board