



Australian Government

**Department of Sustainability, Environment,
Water, Population and Communities**



INLAND RIVERINE WETLANDS

- Riverine wetlands are wetlands connected by rivers.
- They are found along the edges of rivers, streams and creeks and include rivers, floodplains, marshes, lakes and billabongs. They mostly have freshwater.
- Inland riverine wetlands provide breeding and feeding habitats for many plants and animals, such as reeds, waterbirds and fish.
- They are important for absorbing, recycling and releasing nutrients and trapping sediment.

Inland riverine wetlands in Australia

- Inland riverine wetlands are mostly in eastern Australia where the rainfall is higher and there are more rivers.
- They have evolved to cope with the country's dry, but highly variable climate.
- These wetlands provide refuges for wildlife during drought.
- They can store flood waters during floods.
- The Murray-Darling Basin has many inland riverine wetlands. An example of an internationally important Murray River wetland is the Barmah-Millewa Forest.

Barmah-Millewa Forest:

- When the river floods, water covers the floodplain and the area forms a huge wetland with the forests amongst it.
- It is Australia's largest river red gum forest and the biggest ecosystem of river red gums in the world.

Did you know?

The Murray River is Australia's longest river at 2375 kilometres.

Inland riverine wetlands of Northern Australia:

- Some dry out completely over the dry season (April – October), while others keep water in them all year round.
- Permanent waterholes are extremely important habitats for wildlife during the dry season for water and food. For example, seed-eating birds, such as the colourful Gouldian finch, need access to water to survive.
- The dry season reduces the river flows of large rivers such as the Fitzroy River in Western Australia and the Daly River in the Northern Territory.



Plants and animals

- Platypuses live in many inland riverine wetlands. They eat worms and small crayfish, finding food by using special sensors in their bills that detect small electrical currents produced by their live food.
- River red gums can grow 45 metres tall and provide nesting hollows for birds such as galahs, sulphur-crested cockatoos, gang-gang cockatoos, cockatiels and superb parrots.
- The Murray-Darling Basin is home to the Murray cod, Australia's largest freshwater fish. Murray cod prefer areas that have deep waterholes with cover from large rocks, fallen trees, stumps, clay banks and overhanging vegetation. Murray cod are a nationally threatened species.
- Pig-nosed turtles live in the freshwater rivers and creeks of northern Australia. They have flippers for feet, making them one of the best freshwater turtles adapted for aquatic life.

Did you know?

The platypus is a mammal that lays eggs. Male platypuses produce venom strong enough to kill a small dog or cat.

What can you do?

- Investigate what AuSSI (Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative) schools are doing to become more sustainable with their water use. Many of these schools are implementing actions such as installing rainwater tanks that have been connected to the school toilets or gardens or working with their communities to reduce pollution entering stormwater drains and impacting on local waterways. Some schools are partnering with their local communities to conserve local wetlands: <http://www.environment.gov.au/education/aussi/>.
- Investigate the Murray-Darling Basin on Google Earth (<http://www.google.com/earth/index.html>).

Threats facing inland riverine wetlands

Inland riverine wetlands are vulnerable to numerous threats.

Threat	Impact
Reduced river flows from climate change, unsustainable water regulation and extraction.	Damage to ecosystems.
Introduced animals, such as horses, pigs and buffalo.	Eroding river banks and destroying plants.
Introduced fish, such as carp.	Predate on native fish and cause water turbidity.
Weeds.	Displace native vegetation and alter habitat.
Pollution from urban, industrial and agricultural products.	Wash into waterways and can poison animals and plants.
Livestock grazing around waterways.	Damage water edges, trample vegetation and add nutrients to waterways.

