



Wetlands

of south-western Queensland

Cooba shrubby swamps

Landform and water regime

Cooba shrubby swamps occur mainly in basins but sometimes in channels and on flats. Soils are deep-cracking clays and the ground often is hummocky with potholes. Water supply may be from rivers or from local runoff. Inundation is temporary and some cooba shrubby swamps are dry for many months or years. Water depth is usually less than 1.0 m. Water in cooba shrubby swamps normally is fresh (non-saline) and turbid.

Typical vegetation

This wetland type is characterised by sparse to open shrubland of river cooba (belalie) *Acacia stenophylla*, usually with some other trees and shrubs present. The river cooba shrubs may be up to 3.0 m high.

Associated wetland types

- Wooded watercourses.
- Lignum swamps.
- Eucalypt wooded swamps.

Distribution in south-western Queensland

This wetland type is rare and localised in south-western Queensland. The largest examples occur in the Channel Country and Mulga Lands biogeographic regions.

Prominent examples of this type

- The central and western parts of Lake Dartmouth (west of Charleville).
- A distinct, cooba-dominated swamp occurs in the Bulloo Lake system (south-west of Thargomindah).
- Parts of Lake Cuddapan (south-west of Windorah).

Occurrence in protected areas

This wetland type occurs only as minor examples in (3) national parks in south-western Queensland. None of the (above) prominent examples are in protected areas.

Principal conservation values

- Support breeding colonies of glossy ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (an uncommon breeding species in Queensland), spoonbills, cormorants and other colonial waterbirds that mainly nest in shrub habitat.
- Support a suite of other waterbirds that depend on the cooba's permanent dense cover for shelter and breeding.



Swamp dominated by
river cooba
(R. Jaensch, Wetlands
International)

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Cooba shrubby swamps cont...

Characteristic plant species

Plants commonly associated with the river cooba:

Trees and shrubs:

coolibah *Eucalyptus coolabah*

black box *Eucalyptus largiflorens*

lignum *Muehlenbeckia florulenta*

Grasses, sedges and forbs:

pale spike rush *Eleocharis pallens*

common nardoo *Marsilea drummondii*

water fern *Azolla pinnata*.

Characteristic waterbird species

Breeding colonies:

little pied cormorant *Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*

glossy ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

Australian white ibis *Threskiornis molucca*

straw-necked ibis *Threskiornis spinicollis*

royal spoonbill *Platalea regia*

yellow-billed spoonbill *Platalea flavipes*

Some other species that occur:

Pacific black duck *Anas superciliosa*

grey teal *Anas gracilis*

pink-eared duck *Malacorhynchus membranaceus*

hardhead *Aythya australis*

white-faced heron *Ardea novaehollandiae*

great egret *Ardea alba*

nankeen night heron *Nycticorax caledonicus*

Baillon's crane *Porzana pusilla*

Australian spotted crane *Porzana fluminea*

black-tailed native-hen *Gallinula ventralis*

red-kneed dotterel *Erythrogonyx cinctus*

Other fauna

Some freshwater fishes such as desert rainbowfish *Melanotaenia splendida tatei* probably occur. There is little information on other fauna (reptiles, frogs, invertebrates). Freshwater crabs *Holthuisiana transversa* are known to occur.

Threats to the conservation values

- Reduced inundation which may eliminate some wetland processes, reduce habitat diversity and prevent reproduction of wetland plants and animals.

Management responses required

- Community-wide consultation and education to prevent/minimise new water extraction/diversion schemes both upstream and on-site.



Nestling glossy ibis: this species breeds in cooba shrubby swamps

(R. Jaensch, Wetlands International)

- Establish and implement voluntary conservation agreements between landholders and government to increase the area of representative examples under protection.

Gaps in knowledge

This wetland type is not well known in south-western Queensland. Knowledge of hydrology, ecological processes (eg. breeding colonies) and occurrence of wetland species (fishes, frogs, invertebrates) is inadequate.

Further reading

Ford, G.I. 1996. Inventory of wetlands, Mulga Lands biogeographic region, south-western Queensland. Unpublished report to Dept of Environment and Heritage, Toowoomba, Queensland. Site account for Lake Dartmouth.

Jaensch, R.P. 1998. A survey of waterbirds of Bulloo Lake and the Cooper floodplain, south-west Queensland, August-September 1997. Unpublished report. Wetlands International – Oceania, Canberra.

For further information, contact:

Environmental Protection Agency, 160 Ann Street, Brisbane (Tel: 07-3227-8186), or regional offices of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service in Toowoomba and Rockhampton.