

of south-western Queensland

Sedge swamps

Landform and water regime

Sedge swamps occur in the terminal basins and floodplains of river systems. Soils are deep cracking clays and the ground often is hummocky with potholes. Water supply is from rivers. Inundation typically is temporary and some swamps are dry for many months. However, sedge swamps seem to be associated with river systems that flood regularly (in most years). Water in sedge swamps normally is fresh (non-saline) and moderately or slightly turbid.

Typical vegetation

This wetland type is characterised by dense sedgeland of pale spike-rush *Eleocharis pallens* (height: up to 0.5 m) and other sedges. Scattered shrubs of lignum *Muehlenbeckia florulenta* or trees may occur.

Associated wetland types

- Wooded watercourses.
- Shrubby floodplain watercourses.
- Temporary freshwater lakes without grassland.
- Lignum swamps.
- Cooba shrubby swamps.

Distribution in south-western Queensland

This wetland type is relatively rare in south-western Queensland, occurring only in the Channel Country and Darling Riverine Plains biogeographic regions.

Prominent examples of this type

- Bulloo Lake (south-west of Thargomindah) includes the largest examples of this type in south-western Queensland.

Occurrence in protected areas

This wetland type is represented (minor occurrence) in only one national park (Currawinya) in south-western Queensland.

Principal conservation values

- Provides feeding grounds for large wading waterbirds, notably brolga *Grus rubicunda* and ibises.
- Probably an important habitat for small animals that require dense continuous vegetation that is subject to regular inundation.
- Otherwise, conservation values are not fully known.



Eleocharis sedge swamp, Bulloo Lake
(R. Jaensch, Wetlands International)

of south-western Queensland

Sedge swamps cont...

Characteristic plant species

Plants commonly associated with the spike-rush:

Trees and shrubs:

river cooba *Acacia stenophylla*
coolibah *Eucalyptus coolabah*
lignum *Muehlenbeckia florulenta*
northern bluebush *Chenopodium auricomum*

Grasses, sedges and forbs:

rat's tail couch *Sporobolus mitchellii*
native millet *Panicum* spp.
sedges *Cyperus* spp.
club-rushes *Schoenoplectus* spp.
joyweed *Alternanthera* spp.
common nardoo *Marsilea drummondii*

Characteristic waterbird species

Pacific black duck *Anas superciliosa*
great egret *Ardea alba*
glossy ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*
Australian white ibis *Threskiornis molucca*
straw-necked ibis *Threskiornis spinicollis*
swamp harrier *Circus approximans*
brolga *Grus rubicunda*
purple swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*
little grassbird *Megalurus graminea*

Other fauna

The dense vegetation and regular inundation of sedge swamps probably enables a number of frog and small mammal species to occur. However, little if anything is known of the fauna of sedge swamps.

Threats to the conservation values

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

Management responses required

- Community-wide consultation and education to prevent/minimise new water extraction/diversion schemes both upstream and on-site.
- Manage grazing in sedge swamps to ensure long-term viability of sedgeland.
- Establish and implement voluntary conservation agreements between landholders and government to increase the area of representative examples under protection.



Brolga

(Environmental Protection Agency)

Gaps in knowledge

This wetland type is not well known in south-western Queensland and apparently has been overlooked. There is little published information apart from some data from the Paroo floodplain in NSW. Knowledge of hydrology, ecological processes and occurrence of wetland species (fishes, frogs, invertebrates) is inadequate.

Further reading

Kingsford RT. ed. 1999. *A free-flowing river: the ecology of the Paroo River*. NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Hurstville. p. 27.

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.