

A Directory of Important

Wetlands in Australia

Third Edition



A cooperative project between the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments of Australia, coordinated by Environment Australia and involving:

- Environment ACT
- New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service
- Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory
- Queensland Environmental Protection Agency
- South Australian Department for Environment and Heritage
- Tasmanian Department of Primary Industry, Water and Environment
- Victorian Department of Natural Resources and Environment
- Western Australian Department of Conservation and Land Management

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A Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia is now online at:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/water/wetlands>

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Front cover photographs

River Red Gums along the Paroo River, south-west Queensland
Great Egret (*Ardea alba*), Darling River billabong, north-west NSW
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Foreword

IT IS WELL RECOGNISED THAT WETLANDS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN MAINTAINING BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY. They also perform vital functions such as water purification, nutrient retention, maintenance of water tables, storm protection, flood mitigation, shoreline stabilisation, erosion control, and groundwater recharge—all of which are important for Australia's unique natural resources and landscape. Wetlands also provide for social and cultural wellbeing and, if managed wisely, they can provide economic benefits.

The special values and functions of wetlands can only be maintained if ecological processes are allowed to continue to function. Unfortunately, wetlands are amongst the most threatened ecosystems worldwide due largely to destructive practices such as draining, infilling, pollution and overexploitation of their resources. In order to prevent further loss of important wetland habitat in Australia, building and maintaining a comprehensive inventory of our wetlands is crucial so that we gain a better understanding of their values and location.

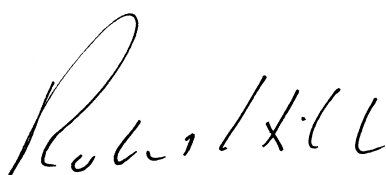
The Commonwealth Government has invested around \$2 million through the National Wetlands Program to do just that—to undertake, in cooperation with State and Territory governments, a comprehensive inventory of Australia's nationally important wetlands known as *A Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia* (the Directory). Since the release of the first and second editions of the Directory in 1993 and 1996 respectively, funding has been provided for comprehensive reviews of existing data and to investigate regions of Australia that were previously under-represented or not represented in the Directory.

At the time of the launch of the second edition of the Directory, the Commonwealth Government made a commitment to investigate means by which the information contained in the Directory could be made electronically available via the Internet. This will make it more widely available to a wide variety of potential users wishing to access the information. The Commonwealth Government has honoured this commitment—*A Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia* is now available "online" on the Environment Australia website.

With this shift from hard copy to electronic format, the Directory data set is now easier to update—as new information becomes available it will be immediately uploaded. From now on the electronic Directory will greatly facilitate more rapid availability of the data for nationally important wetland sites.

I envisage that the Directory will become a much more useful tool for policy makers, biodiversity professionals and the community. It provides information useful for making decisions on the protection of wetlands and how wetland resources will be utilised. It will enable those who wish to restore or rehabilitate wetlands to access a valuable source of information on wetland characteristics. It can also provide a substantial basis for the future development of a national wetlands inventory to document all of Australia's wetlands, not just those that are considered to be nationally or internationally important.

It is particularly auspicious that both the summary publication of the third edition of the Directory and the online database are launched on 2 February 2001—World Wetlands Day. It marks the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) to which Australia was one of the first signatories, and is cause for celebration. Australia has made a valuable contribution to wetland conservation during this time and these launches provide an opportunity to promote not only to all Australians but to the International community alike that the Australian Government is continuing to meet its strong commitment to the conservation of Australia's important wetlands.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Robert Hill'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'R'.

ROBERT HILL

Minister for the Environment and Heritage

FEBRUARY 2001



Acknowledgments

THE WETLANDS SECTION WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE AUTHORS who produced the Introductory text for their respective State and Territory Chapters for their input to this publication. The primary authors and contributors are Mark Lintermans (ACT), Paul Adam and Deb Stevenson (NSW), Gavin Blackman (Qld), Stewart Blackhall (Tas), Janet Holmes (Vic), and Jim Lane (WA).

No new Introductory text was provided for NT and SA. The text for these chapters was edited and updated by the national editors.

We would also like to thank NHT National Wetlands Program project proponents who contributed new site information to the Directory.

Geoff Larmour produced the summary statistics for the Introduction and Convention on Wetlands Chapters, and the Summary analysis sections for the State and Territory Chapters.

Our colleagues in ERIN provided invaluable assistance. Rod Nowrojee and Mathew Brooks contributed to the publication through the production of maps and underlying GIS layers, and through the production of summary statistics for the Directory sites.

Tony Rosling developed the database to hold both Directory and Ramsar data, and accomplished the transfer of all of the existing site information from text form to the database, enabling the information to be widely accessible via the Internet.



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