



Australian Government

Commonwealth Environmental Water Office

# Murray Wetland Flow 2021 - Update #2

4 November 2021



*Flo the Ibis at Hattah-Kulkyne National Park*

## Murray Wetland Flow

For much of winter and early spring widespread heavy rainfall in the upper catchments has seen high flows down the Murray River. These natural flows are critical to the health of the environment, however unlike what would be expected under natural conditions, much of this water is captured in dams and weirs throughout the Basin.

Releases of water for the environment have been co-ordinated with these natural flows to help connect the river to its wetlands and floodplains. Following the end of flood operations at Hume Dam, delivery of water for the environment recommenced on 20 October.

Sites along the Murray River which that have received water include Barmah-Millewa Forest, Gunbower Forest, parts of Koondrook-Perricoota, Hattah Lakes, the Chowilla, Pike and Katarapko floodplains, the Lower Lakes and Coorong. Many other smaller wetlands, billabongs, creeks and river redgum forests are also benefitting.

Water for the environment is helping to rehabilitate drought impacted floodplains and assisting wetland vegetation communities to grow. It will also provide sufficient habitat for the foraging and breeding of waterbirds, native fish, frog species and various other native fauna.

| Environmental water releases from Hume Dam – Fast Facts |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Objectives</b>                                       | Provide water for creeks and low-lying wetlands along the Murray valley to benefit foraging and breeding opportunities for waterbirds and other native fauna including Murray cod and various frog species. Additionally, support the germination, growth, and resilience of vegetation communities |
| <b>Dates</b>  | 12 August – 2 September 2021<br>20 October 2021 – current   |
| <b>Duration</b>   | Flows planned to continue to December 2021  |
| <b>Flow rate</b>  | Combined with other flows to target up to 3.0m at Tocumwal (~15,000 megalitres per day downstream of Yarrawonga Weir).  |
| <b>Volume released to date</b>                          | Over 160 gigalitres (as at 29 October)  |

## Barmah-Millewa Forest

Wetter than average weather conditions have now provided three natural flood peaks that have passed through the Barmah-Millewa floodplain over recent months. Water for the environment is being strategically delivered to keep water on the floodplain when river levels would have otherwise fallen due to river regulation. A variety of native fish species including the iconic Murray Cod are currently spawning and a large amount of wetland plants can be seen flowering above the shallow water. A short stroll, canoe or boat ride from near Barmah Lake will reveal a large variety of waterbirds that are present throughout the flooded forest and lakes. This internationally significant wetland system being flooded in spring is a sight to behold!



*Barmah Lake (Photo Credit: © Sonia Cooper)*

## Gunbower forest

We are now seeing aquatic plants growing at the Little Reedy Complex. Waterbirds are using the wetlands to forage and feed, with some breeding of ducks and swans observed. This spring delivery of water for the environment to Reedy Lagoon and the Little Reedy Wetland Complex has built on recent results from autumn water deliveries. Low-lying areas of flood dependent vegetation in the lower Gunbower Forest are now being inundated. These areas have also benefitted from recent natural inflows during a peak in the Murray River. Targeted deliveries of water for the environment may continue to specific wetlands to support continued growth of aquatic plants or a waterbird breeding event.



*Aquatic vegetation beginning to grow at Little Reedy wetland complex in Gunbower Forest (Photo Credit: North Central CMA)*

## Hattah Lakes

The spring delivery of water for the environment has commenced at Hattah-Kulkyne National Park, again building on the autumn water delivery earlier this year. Significant bird numbers have been seen with hundreds of black swans nesting at Lake Kramen. Over 2,200 birds have been recorded including vulnerable species, such as hardhead duck, musk duck and regent parrot visiting the site.

## Lindsay, Mulcra & Wallpolla Islands

At Lindsay-Mulcra Wallpolla islands natural inflows from a high Murray River have watered several key

wetlands in spring. Water for the environment is being used at several additional sites to complement natural inflows to improve the health of river red gums, black box and lignum.



*Black swans nesting at Lake Kramen in Hattah-Kulkyne National Park (Photo Credit: Mallee CMA)*

## Chowilla, Pike and Katarapko Floodplains

Infrastructure at Chowilla, Pike and Katarapko is being used to direct and hold water out over the floodplain, utilising water from the raised weir pools at locks 6, 5 and 4. Ecologists are seeing fantastic responses. Eight frog species are calling including large numbers of the southern bell frog, as stands of lignum green up and flower providing perfect habitat. Water is extending out to areas of black box which are starting to flower and birds are responding to the favourable conditions across the three floodplains.

At Coombool Swamp on the Chowilla floodplain birds in the thousands are enjoying the watering including large numbers of grey teal, pink eared duck, white-headed stilt and avocets. Red-capped plover and sharp-tailed sandpiper have also returned along with grebes, swans and both straw-necked and glossy black ibis.

## The Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth

We are seeing large numbers of native fish moving through the 11 fishways at the Lower Murray barrages (separating Lake Alexandrina from the Coorong). In August and September, pouched



lamprey were caught and tagged as they began their upstream migration to their spawning grounds. In October, tiny young-of-year congolli and common galaxias (native fish that move between fresh and saltwater) are being monitored, as they migrate upstream to the freshwater of Lake Alexandrina. Natural flows are currently providing excellent conditions for fish migration, and water for the environment used in early summer will support the entire migration period.

## How can I keep track of this flow?

More about this flow:

<https://www.environment.gov.au/water/cewo/catchment/murray-wetland-flow-2021>

More about the river:

- [Real-time River Murray flow](#) information.
- [River Murray Weekly Report](#) – river operations, inflows, river gauge heights, rainfall and salinity
- [Whose water is in the river](#) – monthly update of water for the environment and other water users.

## Working in partnership

The Murray Wetland Flow is being managed in partnership with the NSW, Victoria, and South Australia governments and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority.

The Murray Wetland Flow is co-ordinated with flows from other major rivers including the Goulburn, Murrumbidgee and Baaka (Lower Darling).



*Fishway cage trap being removed at the Lower Murray barrages (Photo Credit: Kirsty Wedge, DEW)*

## Local Engagement Officers



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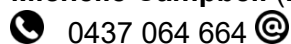


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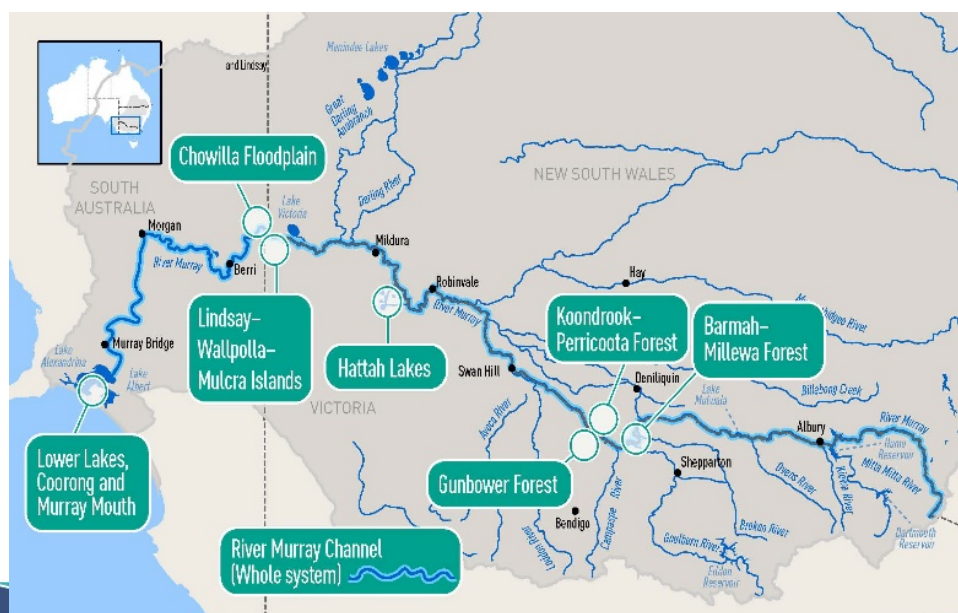
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*Location of wetland sites along the length of the Murray.*