

Lower Balonne Flow 2021 – Update # 2

Objectives Reconnect rivers in the Lower Balonne and further downstream.
Inundate Narran Lakes Ramsar site to continue rebuilding critical waterbird breeding habitat.

Target areas Lower Balonne rivers, Narran Lakes Ramsar site, and the Darling River.

Snapshot of the flows

More than 330 gigalitres (GL) has flowed passed the St George gauge since January 2021. This inflow is important, but relatively small: only one-third of the historical annual average and less than a quarter of the 1,442 GL that passed St George in early 2020. Commonwealth water for the environment contributed around 43 GL across the Queensland Lower Balonne rivers during March and April 2021. Over 36 GL of this water passed the New South Wales border, contributing to flows downstream in the Darling River. The Commonwealth portfolio also contributed around 3 GL from the Nebine Creek. This water will help build on the environmental benefits achieved from last year's [flow event](#).



Narran River downstream of the Clyde Weir flowing at around 1,076 ML/d on 30 March 2021 (Photo: CEWO)

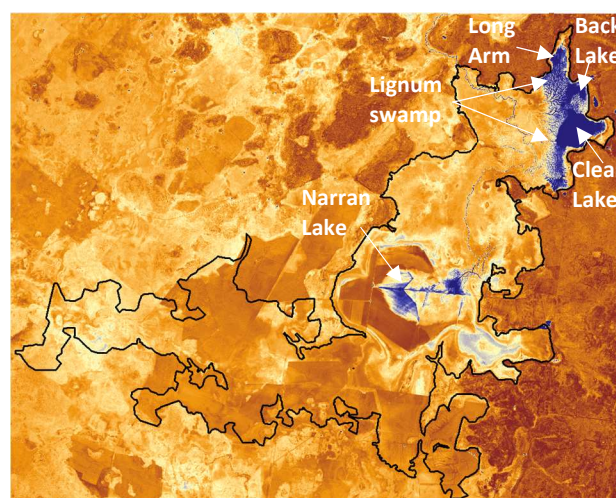
Early benefits of the flow

Queensland department staff have been monitoring native fish across the Lower Balonne during these flows. Fish sampling in spring last year and autumn this year found that golden perch had successfully spawned and recruited across the catchment over the past two years.



A range of golden perch size classes were caught during recent monitoring across the Lower Balonne demonstrating that golden perch have spawned and recruited in response to flows over the past 12 months (Photo: Qld DES)

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority's monitoring found that 31 GL of inflows inundated 1,930 ha of habitat in the Narran Lakes ecosystem. All the important waterbird breeding habitat within the Ramsar site was inundated, including Clear Lake, Back Lake, Long Arm and Lignum Swamp. Other areas of the ecosystem were partially inundated, including Narran Lake to the south of the Ramsar site.



Sentinel image showing 1,930 ha of the Narran Lakes ecosystem inundated on 25 April 2021 (Image: MDBA)



NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service conducted a waterbird survey following the Narran Lakes inflows. In April, 33 species were observed, including brolgas and freckled duck. Both species are listed as threatened in NSW.



Dr Joanne Ocock surveying waterbirds in the Narran Lake Nature Reserve in April 2021 (Photo: Jennifer Holcombe, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service)

The collaborative monitoring effort between Commonwealth and state government agencies, researchers and the Narran Lakes Joint Management Committee will continue over coming months. The next monitoring update will be provided in spring.

Introducing our new Local Engagement Officer

The CEWO warmly welcomes Sally Dickinson to the Northern Basin Section. Sally brings a wealth of experience to the CEWO having worked in sustainable agriculture, natural resource management and with rural communities across the basin. Sally is based at



Goondiwindi and will work closely with our existing northern Basin Local Engagement Officers Jane Humphries and Jason Wilson. It's great to have Sally join the team!

Narran Lakes Open Day

The Narran Lake Nature Reserve Open Day is on this Friday 11 and Saturday 12 June. The event is being co-ordinated by New South Wales Parks and Wildlife Service and the Narran Lakes Joint Management Committee. Further details about the event can be found [here](#).



Local Engagement Officer and Narran Lakes Joint Management Committee Chair, Jason Wilson, welcoming visitors to the Narran Lake Nature Reserve (Photo: CEWO)

In other news...

The Australian Government is funding several [projects](#) to enhance the benefits of water for the environment across the Lower Balonne. These projects form part of the [Northern Basin Toolkit](#).



A business case will be developed for a fishway at the Cubbie Weir along the Culgoa River as part of the Northern Basin Toolkit (Photo: Paul Brimblecombe)

More information

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