



*Healthy Rivers,  
Healthy Communities*

# Gwydir booms again in 2021

Cycles of 'boom' and 'bust' periods dominate the Gwydir floodplain. Longer dry periods are often broken by flooding rains. The past several years have been one of those very dry spells for the Gwydir. However, the current 'boom' will help to rejuvenate the landscape and community after the long dry.

The flows of December 2020, January 2021 and the flooding of March 2021 finally broke the driest four years on record. This is in the context of a predominately dry decade since 2012. These floods are a relatively short 'boom' with the natural river environment expected to take multiple years to recover.

Whilst they provided multiple benefits to the environment and many Basin communities, flooding during March 2021 significantly impacted many rural communities in the Gwydir catchment. Homes and properties were inundated, crops were drowned and infrastructure was damaged. Environmental water managers are careful to avoid contributing additional water during these natural flood peaks.





*Sharp-tailed Sandpiper in the Gwydir. Photo: Peter Knock, Eco Logical Australia.*

## Wetlands are primed

In April, monitoring observed vegetation in the Gwydir Wetlands State Conservation Area starting to grow in areas not previously inundated since 2012. Breeding was detected in 18 waterbird species, including Great egrets, cormorants and Magpie geese on the Gingham watercourse. Cormorants and darters were seen nesting along the Lower Gwydir River during the February survey. Several endangered waterbird species including Freckled duck, Black-necked stork, Brolga, Black-tailed godwit and Magpie geese were also spotted during surveys undertaken in spring and autumn. Monitoring is undertaken by NSW Planning Industry and Environment – Environment, Energy and Science, [Gwydir Monitoring Evaluation and Research](#) providers and NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.

## For further information contact:

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For more information on water for the environment delivered in the Gwydir during 2020-21 scan the QR code



***The CEWO acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the Murray-Darling Basin. We pay our respect to them and their elders both past and present.***

## Our water helped too!

Water for the environment supported a small egret breeding colony in the Gwydir wetlands by extending stable flows and helped connect the Gwydir and Barwon-Darling rivers between the summer and autumn of 2020-21. Over summer, our water released from Copeton Dam hundreds of kilometres upstream topped up stagnant pools after the long dry. Our water licences continued to protect moderate-sized flows following further heavy rainfall in autumn, connecting rivers and their floodplains. This provides food for native fish and opportunities for them to move into a greater range of habitats.

## Working together

Water for the environment is provided by both the Commonwealth and NSW. Environmental water managers work in partnership with Traditional Owners, communities, scientists, and government agencies - these contributions help identify the best outcomes from environmental water. WaterNSW's [Water Insights Portal](#) provides key information on how water is being managed and shared within the Gwydir.



*Eastern sign-bearing froglet, Old Dromana Ramsar Site, Gwydir Wetlands State Conservation Area.*

*Photo: Joanne Ocock, NSW DPIE.*