

Getting Involved

Wetland Monitoring

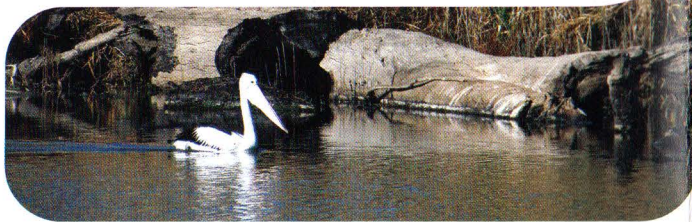
Monitoring of the Martin Bend wetland is undertaken quarterly, and generally on the first Sunday of the respective month. Groundwater, surface water quality and vegetation health are all assessed. In season fish, frog and bird surveys are also carried out. Photo points are also used and are a great way to see the changes in the landscape. Monitoring is important to see if the management of the wetland is working.

Monitoring is carried out by volunteers, the Berri-Barmera Local Action Planning Committee (BBLAP) and staff from Natural Resources South Australian Murray-Darling Basin.

Wetland Management

The Berri Barmera Council has established a committee of key stakeholders to develop a vision statement for the management of Martin Bend, including the ski club and marina. This committee will be influential in setting a strategic plan for future activities at Martin Bend.

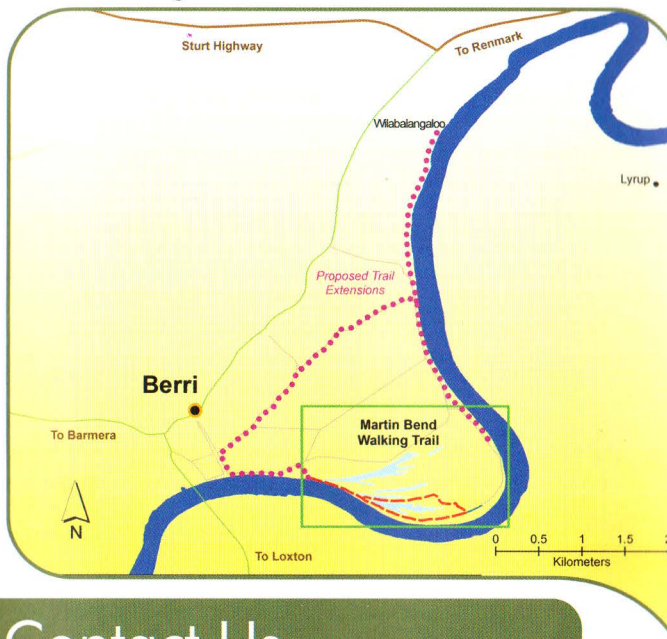
A component of this is the Wetland Management Plan for Martin Bend, which specifies hydrological (wetting and drying) cycles, ecological objectives and monitoring methodologies. Implementation of this plan is coordinated by the BBLAP Committee, in conjunction with staff from Natural Resources SAMDB and community members.



Join in the fun!

New volunteers are always welcome to join in wetland monitoring or decision making processes needed to assist with the monitoring. Please contact the Berri Barmera LAP if you would like to become involved.

Planning is currently underway to install boardwalks on some sections of the existing trail to enable it to be accessed in low to moderate flood events, and to extend the trail in 2 stages. The first stage as a loop from the Berri Ski Club to and along Fenwick Rd, Kay Ave, Vaughan Tce to the River and back to the Marina. The second stage will be along the River from Martin Bend to Wilabalangaloo.



Contact Us

Berri Barmera LAP
PO Box 427
Berri SA 5343
Ph (08) 8582 2183

Berri Barmera Council
PO Box 229
Berri SA 5343
Ph (08) 8582 1922

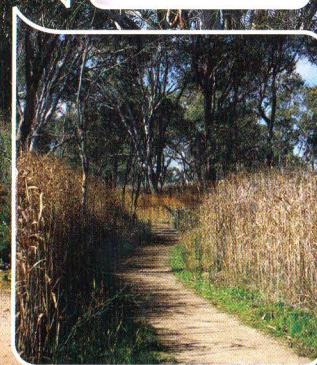
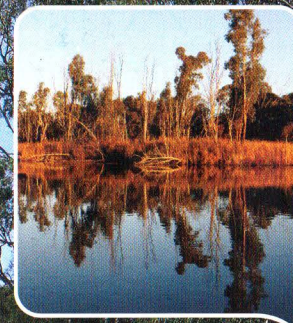
Natural Resources Centre
PO Box 1374
Berri SA 5343
Ph (08) 8580 1800

Lions Club Berri
PO Box 43
Berri SA 5343



This brochure was developed by Berri Barmera LAP and the Martin Bend Recreational Use Committee through funding received from the SA MBD NRM Board's Community Grants Program and the Berri Barmera Council. It is printed on 100% recycled paper.

Martin Bend Wetland



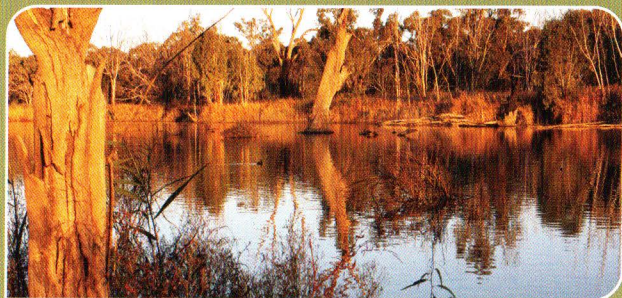
LION ALLAN THURMER RECREATIONAL TRAIL

Welcome to Martin Bend

Martin Bend wetland is situated on the edge of the township of Berri in South Australia. It consists of five lagoons, one of which has a permanent connection to the River Murray.

The Berri Barmera Local Action Planning Committee (BBLAP), in conjunction with the South Australian Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Board and the community, have installed a flow control structure on the inlet to the permanent lagoon to enable the wetland to be dried out periodically to mimic naturally wetting and drying cycles.

These cycles are necessary to keep our flora and fauna healthy. Other infrastructure you will see aids filling of the temporary lagoons at lower flow levels, to compensate for the reduced frequency of flood events we now experience.



The main habitat types at Martin Bend are open woodland with its tall trees, the floodplain habitat which has less tall trees but many small bushes, and the wetland lagoons with reeds, sedges and a range of aquatic plants.

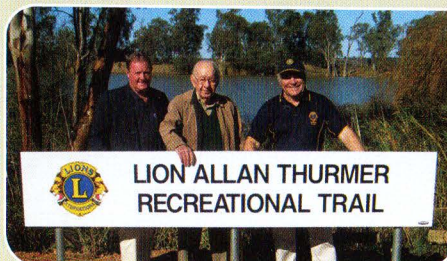
A large variety of birds, frogs, reptiles, fish and plant-life call Martin Bend home. Being so close to town, the wetland gets many visitors, who use the wetland for walking or bird watching.

The Walking Trail

The trail was initiated by the Berri Lions Club in the early 1970s.

It was named after Lion Allan Thurmer who received the Lions Club highest honour, the Melvin Jones Fellowship in 2013 to recognise his outstanding contribution to the revitalisation of the Berri river front and the establishment and ongoing maintenance of the walking trail.

The trail was developed to showcase the diverse natural environment of the surrounding area. This is explained in a series of interpretive signs along the trail. Allow 1.5 hours for the loop walk.



Peter Hunt, Allan Thurmer and Allan Dand at the opening of the Recreational Trail.

Wildlife

A wide range of wildlife can be found at Martin Bend. As you walk around you may see Western Grey Kangaroos, a variety of reptiles including sleepy lizards, goannas, skinks and snakes, and a range of insects and spiders.

If you stand quietly on the riverbank you could be so lucky to see a Water Rat swim past, easily identified by the white tip on the tail. Waterbirds are usually on the lagoons and if you keep an ear out you will hear many smaller birds in the trees.

Whilst you may not easily see them, when full, the wetlands are host to a variety of native fish and frog species. If you listen carefully, you may hear a frog croaking from the reeds.

Bird-life

Approximately 60 different species of birds have been recorded at Martin Bend

Changes in the environment, like floods and drought, are readily reflected in the abundance and variety of the birds around you.

Besides the birds on the water (see the interpretive sign at the permanent lagoon), listen and see what bush birds you can find. Bright-green Red-rumped Parrots and Crimson Rosellas (despite its name a yellow parrot with purple cheeks) can be seen in the trees nearby or coming in for a drink.

Familiar birds like Magpies and Ravens, but also smaller birds like Weebills and different Honeyeaters can be spotted, feeding on nectar and insects. You may see a Brown Treecreeper hopping upwards along a tree trunk, looking for insects under the bark. Superb Fairy-wrens move around in family groups, the bright blue bird is the dominant male.

Overhead you may see birds of prey like a Whistling Kite or Swamp Harrier.

Vegetation

The main trees at Martin Bend are Black Box and River Red Gums, two species of Eucalypt, and River Coobah which is a species of Acacia.

The Black Box has rough dark bark and grey-green leaves. The River Red Gum has a light coloured trunk and is often found closer to water than the Black Box. Some of the larger River Red Gums are hundreds of years old. The River Coobah is easy to recognise by its weeping branches and its long and narrow leaves that hang down.

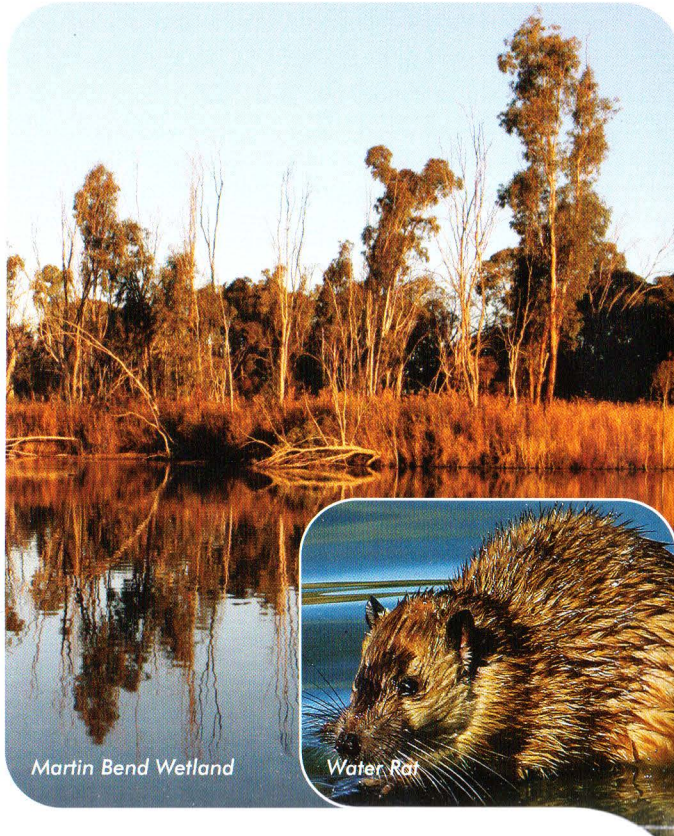
The understory consists mainly of small shrubs in the *Chenopod* family, like various Salt Bushes (*Atriplex* sp.) and Blue Bushes (*Maireana* sp.).

Explore the Martin Bend Wetland & Walking Trail

1 Reeds

Along this section of the walk you will see dense reeds, known as the Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*). Although it creates shelter for birds and other animals, the rapid spread (up to 5 meters per year) of the reeds around wetlands in Australia is becoming problematic.

It is a tough plant that thrives in both brackish and fresh water. The dense reed mats crowd out native plants and animals, slows down the water flow, reduces oxygen levels and blocks out sunlight needed by organisms living in the water. Before the introduction of the locks the more regular flood events would drown most (but not all) of the plants, hereby controlling them.



5 Dead trees

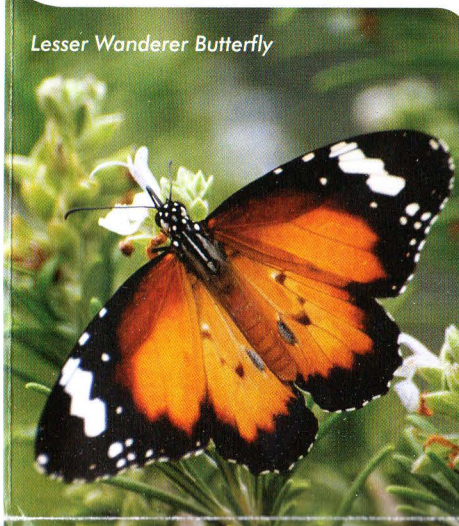
There are many dead trees around you along here. Since locks and large water holding dams were built, the frequency and depth of floods have been reduced considerably. Many species of plants and trees here on the floodplain rely on these regular floods for survival. At the same time many of these species do not cope with being flooded permanently.

Increasing salinity as a result of irrigation and vegetation clearance in the mallee causing saline water to be pushed up into the root zone is another reason for the die-back of trees. Fortunately more insight in this matter has resulted in better ecological management and irrigation techniques.

6 Lignum

At this point on the walk you will see lots of tangled looking bushes, this is Lignum (*Duma florulenta*). Lignum is an important plant on the floodplain.

Lesser Wanderer Butterfly



Little Friarbird



2 Friarbirds

Little Friarbirds are often around in the area near this corner. If you hear strange loud cackling noises you may have one nearby. It is a medium-sized (27 cm) grey-brown bird with a bluey bald patch over its face and a long curved bill.

This bald patch gave it its name, referring to the friars (a religious order of people serving the community and living in poverty) who in history often shaved some or all of their hair off as a sign of devotion.

3 Regeneration

Local groups like the Lions Club have planted many trees at Martin Bend over the years but many did not survive due to ongoing drought and underlying salinity of the area. Thanks to natural flood events in 2010 and 2011, many young Black Box and River Red Gum trees have now germinated naturally. This regeneration is needed to replace dying trees.

4 Ruby Saltbush

Keep an eye out along this stretch for the Ruby Salt Bush (*Enchyleana tomentosa*) with its fleshy grey-green leaves and yellow or red berries. The berries are edible and are high in vitamin C, and are sometimes called "bush lollies" by Aboriginal children.

Bearded Dragon



Purple Swamp Hen



River Red Gum in flower

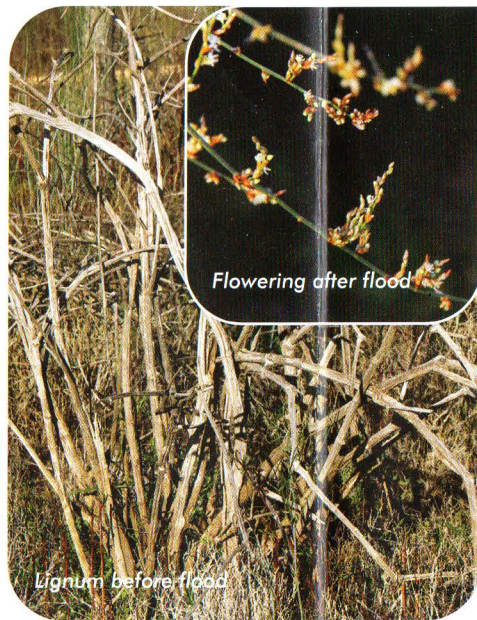


Ruby Saltbush Berries

Lignum (*Duma horridula*). Lignum is an important plant on the floodplain. It is extremely tough, and can survive both prolonged flooding and drought, and is also salt tolerant.

It may look grey, leafless and dead at times but after good rains or a flood it resprouts quickly, and even puts out little cream-coloured flowers. It provides shelter to kangaroos and birds, combats erosion and helps to keep the water table healthy.

Flowering after flood



Lignum before flood

7 Healthy River Red Gums

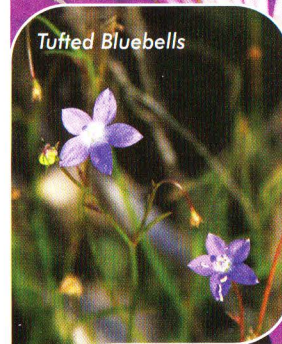
Some great examples of healthy River Red Gums can be found along here. River Red Gums do well near the water's edge and need a flood to go over their roots once every 3-5 years or so.

At the same time they don't like being flooded too long either or they will die. Older River Red Gums contain lots of hollows which are important for Carpet Pythons, bats and hollow-breeding birds including the locally occurring endangered Regent Parrot.

Round Leaf Pigface



Tufted Bluebells



8 Wildflowers

Near the first white post after the interpretive sign about Woodland Birds is a good spot for wildflowers.

You may have to look closely as they are often small. The murray mallee broadly consists of poor soils and low rainfall and therefore the plants cannot afford to waste energy on large flowers.

Different Daisy species and the tiny, purple Tufted Bluebells (*Wahlenbergia communis*) are often present.