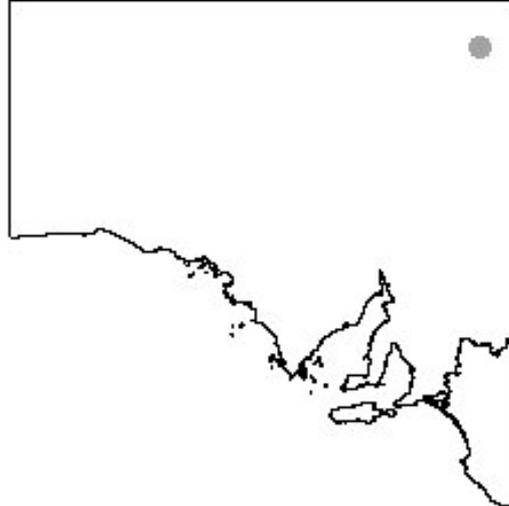


Biological Survey of the Coongie Lakes

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Summary:

The Coongie Lakes Study report is a product of a field biological survey program spanning 11 months from November 1986 to October 1987. The Coongie Lakes study included an area of 6 lakes in the Cooper Creek floodplain in the far north east of South Australia.

The primary aim of the study was to undertake a survey of the natural history of the Coongie Lakes system: in particular seeking to:

1. identify and document seasonal changes to the flora and fauna;
2. identify and document the impact on the natural environment of human activities such as mining, tourism, grazing and hunting;
3. recommend management strategies.

The area around the Lakes was typified by floodplains, stream channels, lakes and sand dunes. The survey involved sampling 30 sites for terrestrial vertebrate fauna and flora across the range of habitat types. The aquatic survey included collection of physical habitat variables, macrophytes, zooplankton, aquatic macroinvertebrates and fish from up to 42 sites sampling the range of aquatic habitats.

The most significant feature of the Coongie Lakes environment was summarised as the main channel and the lake system for the following reasons:

- its naturalness, beauty and setting in the surrounding arid landscape;
- the absence of regulation of flow along a major river such as the Cooper Creek;
- the range (temporal and spatial) of aquatic habitats represented in the district, from major permanent channels to large ephemeral lakes, densely vegetated swamps and temporarily inundated marshy floodouts;
- the diverse and abundant fauna it supports, including endemic, rare and threatened species;
- the basically natural functioning of the aquatic ecosystem, little changed by the impacts of human activities.

Apart from detailing the habitats, plant and animals of the region the report also discusses the impacts of human activities including tourism, pastoralism, mining and feral animals. A number of recommendations were discussed to best manage these potential impacts.