



The Traditional Owners of the Chowilla Floodplain are the First Peoples of the River Murray and Mallee Region, and the Maraura Nation.

The southern bell frog, once common throughout south-eastern Australia, has suffered a decline in recent decades and is now nationally vulnerable.





At Chowilla, annual surveys have consistently recorded bell frogs, indicating a relatively stable population, and marking Chowilla as one of the last remaining strongholds for the species in South Australia. Environmental water has been instrumental in creating this haven including small-scale temporary pumping to ephemeral wetlands regularly generating productive habitat in an otherwise dry landscape. Monitoring indicates that breeding is occurring at these wetlands, which are complemented by the refuge provided in the permanent creeks and pool connected wetlands.

Since 2014 the operation of the Chowilla regulator has intermittently inundated much larger areas of floodplain, multiplying the availability of breeding habitat and triggering successful widespread recruitment of tadpoles through to frogs.

Water for the environment delivered to the site creates a mosaic of floodplain habitats at Chowilla, allowing exchange of individuals to help sustain a healthy population critical for the species ongoing survival in South Australia.

Traditional Owners undertook an Aboriginal Waterways Assessment at Coombool Swamp in 2020. This coincided with the delivery of water for the environment and a number of culturally significant black swan were recorded nesting on the lake.

As water levels began to draw down, there were concerns that the swans would not complete their breeding cycle. Traditional Owners worked with Chowilla site managers to request additional water for the environment. The extra water was pumped into Coombool Swamp to maintain water levels, providing swans with the resources to hatch and sustain cygnets. Undertaking the Aboriginal Waterways Assessment enabled the sharing of valuable cultural and ecological knowledge and improved the management of the site.

	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23
 Fish	-	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
 Birds	-	A	A	A	A	B	B	C	B	A	A	B	B	B	B	B
 Vegetation	-	D	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	A	C	C	C	C	C	B
 Other	-	C	B	A	D	C	B	B	B	B	-	A	B	B	A	A

Grades

A

Excellent

Most (75-100%) of ecological objectives have been met

B

Good

More than half (50-74%) of ecological objectives have been met

C

Fair

Fewer than half (25-49%) of ecological objectives have been met

D

Needs attention

Few (0-24%) of ecological objectives have been met

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Data not available

2004

First delivery of water for the environment through temporary pumping in South Australia.

2012

Tree condition monitoring program for culturally significant trees initiated.

2014

First successful operation of the Chowilla environmental regulator occurs.

2019

A trial of an alternative way to deliver water for the environment to black box woodland on Monoman Island produced encouraging results.

2020

Collaboration with Traditional Owners continues, with delivery of water for the environment to support outcomes for a culturally significant bird species.

Chowilla consists of a range of aquatic habitats that are now rare in the region. Over 100 km of permanently flowing anabranch creeks support a diverse native fish community, providing a stronghold for Murray cod.



Large ephemeral lakes on the Chowilla floodplain provide important refuges as well as feeding and breeding habitat for waterbirds. Individual lakes regularly support thousands of birds at a time including several species of migratory waders.



NEW SOUTH WALES

Where water for the environment has been delivered to black box woodland, both the trees and a diverse array of understorey vegetation have responded well, providing valuable habitat for a range of species.



River Murray

Murtho

Chowilla Floodplain

Chowilla supports all eight species of frogs expected for the region. Delivery of water for the environment has triggered widespread breeding of all eight species. Ongoing delivery of water for the environment will be critical to maintaining these populations in drier years.



VICTORIA

Lake Victoria

River Murray

Frenchmans Creek

Great Darling Anabranch

The Chowilla Floodplain is the largest remaining area of undeveloped floodplain habitat and the largest old growth river red gum woodland remaining in the lower River Murray.



20 years of The Living Murray
Much achieved, much to do