

WATERBIRD USAGE OF WETLANDS ON THE SWAN COASTAL PLAIN, WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

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Wetlands on the Swan Coastal Plain are recognised as an important habitat for waterbirds, supporting large numbers of many species. This is particularly evident in summer when they act as drought refuges for a significant percentage of the State's waterfowl population. However, since European settlement there has been a significant loss of wetland area, and with an increasing human population the remaining wetlands are under considerable pressure from agricultural, industrial and urban development.

The importance of the large, permanent wetlands on the coastal plain has been established. The purpose of the current project is to assess the value of a range of different wetland types for waterbirds, in particular the small seasonally-inundated areas. The overall aim is to develop management strategies to maintain waterbird populations in the face of increasing pressure from development. Seasonal changes in abundance, species richness, breeding activity and a range of associated environmental parameters were collected for 250 wetlands over 2 years. This paper will describe the methodology and present results of the classification of wetlands into a range of wetland types based on waterbird usage and the relationships between these types and their environmental characteristics. Implications for wetland management will be discussed.



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