



Gunbower exploding with life

Water is slowly moving off the Gunbower Forest floodplain, leaving behind some of the best conditions seen in a very long time.

That water, along with the high natural flows, was the perfect scenario for the forest's aquatic plants and iconic red gums.

Over summer and autumn, many of the plants that grew in response to the 2022 floods dried off, however the seeds, roots and rhizomes were ready to resprout in the right conditions.

Unregulated flows from late June to early August accelerated vegetation growth and germination across the forest.

As the Murray River receded in August, water for the environment deliveries helped keep these water-dependent plants wet coming into the peak growing period as temperatures increased and the days lengthened.

The unregulated inflows in October provided a boost at the right time to help these plants mature, flower, and set seed, bolstering the seedbank for the next time it floods.

River red gums are also benefiting from these flows.

They are now putting on new growth and the canopies are recovering.

Healthy vegetation means healthy birds, and field surveys over the past two seasons have revealed strong numbers of waterbirds, and multiple breeding events on the floodplain.

The real bonus this year was the diversity of birds, with some rare and threatened species recorded.

Highlights so far include Australian little bittern, intermediate egret, white-bellied sea eagle, Baillons crane, whistling kite, and plenty of Australasian darter and cormorant.

Breeding is expected to continue to build into early 2024.



The combination of unregulated and environmental watering created ideal conditions for waterbird breeding over two seasons, and vegetation growth that will help the forest deal with the dry conditions ahead.

A total of 27.6 GL of water for the environment was delivered to the forest this year, compared with a planned volume of up to 89 GL.



The North Central CMA wishes everyone in our catchment a Merry Christmas and safe holiday season.

Our office will close to the public from Christmas Day to 2 January, and will open by appointment only until 8 January, when normal office hours will resume.