

UPLAND WETLANDS OF THE NEW ENGLAND TABLELANDS AND THE MONARO PLATEAU

What are Upland Wetlands?

The Upland Wetlands of the New England Tablelands and the Monaro Plateau are wetlands that are not connected to rivers or streams. Instead, they occur in depressions in the landscape. The persistence of the wetlands throughout the year depends on the depth of the depression in which they occur, the depth of water in the wetland, the catchment area supplying the wetland with water, rainfall patterns, and past and current disturbances. For this reason, the Upland Wetlands can occur as near permanent (rarely dry), intermittent (often seasonally dry) or ephemeral (only occasionally full) wetlands.

The vegetation of the Upland Wetlands ranges from dense sedgeland to grassland. Around deep lagoons or lakes the vegetation occurs on the shores and in the shallower reaches, while shallow or dry-wetlands may have sedges and grasses extending all the way across.

The main characteristics of the Upland Wetlands are:

- they occur in deep depressions in the landscape between 700 to 1400m above sea level
- most of the wetlands occur on basalt-derived soils, the remainder occur on soils derived from other rock types such as granite or silcrete
- they support a range of vegetation such as water plants, sedges, forbs and grasses and
- there are no shrub or tree species that occur naturally within these wetlands, though shrubs and trees in areas surrounding the wetlands can play an important role in controlling run-off and buffering impacts.

The listed ecological community does not include created farm or domestic water storage dams.

In general, ephemeral wetlands have been more heavily degraded than the intermittent or near permanent wetlands, and some are now so degraded that they are no longer part of the listed ecological community. These excluded wetlands are those ephemeral wetlands that have low native species richness (fewer than seven species in total, including both wet and dry conditions) and/or that have introduced species making up more than 50% of plant cover present on average.

A variety of plants and animals make their homes in the Upland Wetlands, including migratory birds such as Latham's Snipe, frogs such as the Brown Toadlet and Peron's Tree Frog, and reptiles like the Eastern Long-necked Turtle. The wetlands also play important ecological and hydrological roles in the environment.

Why are the Upland Wetlands included on the list of threatened ecological communities?

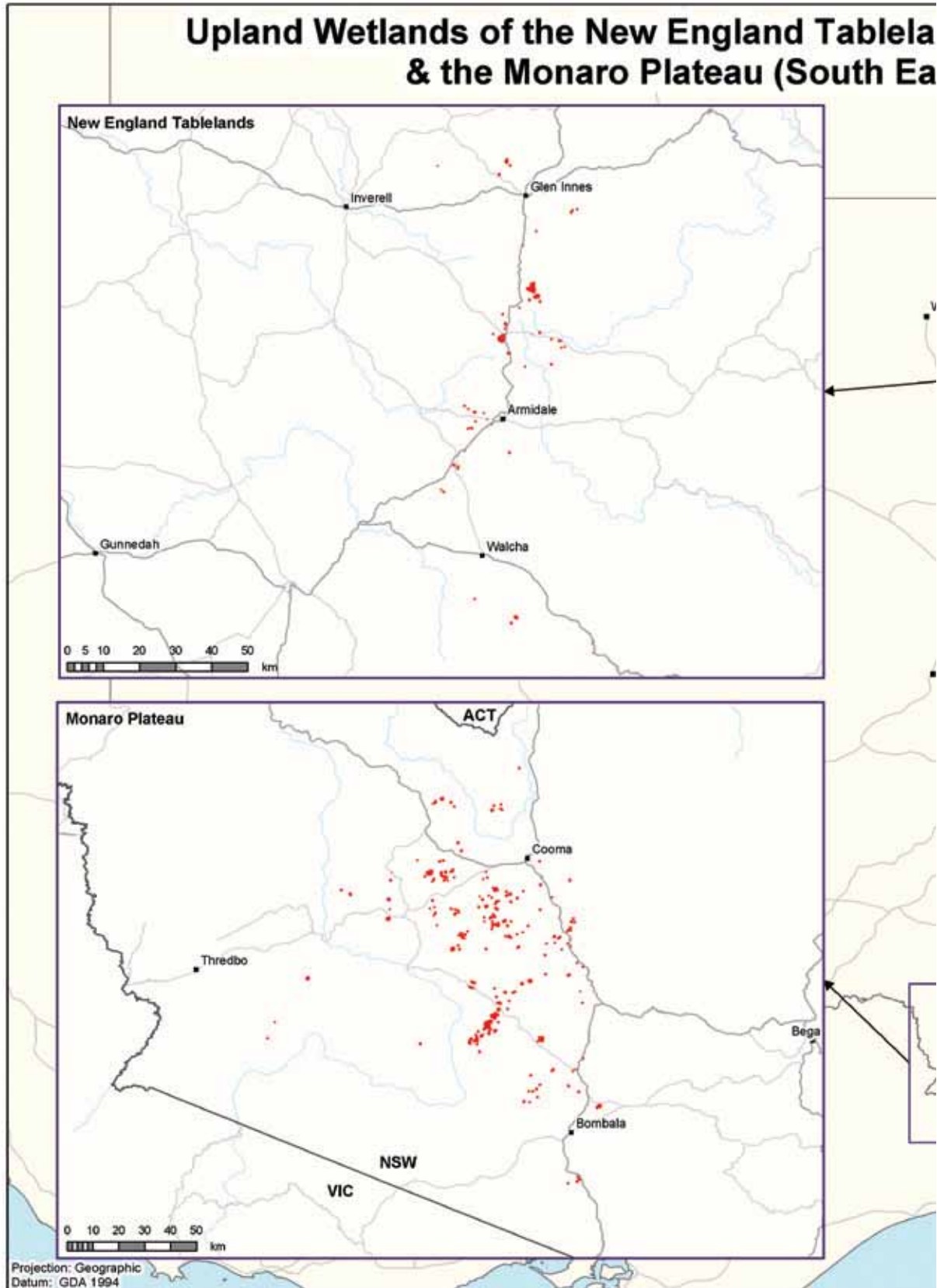
The Upland Wetlands were listed as an endangered ecological community under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) due to their restricted distribution and vulnerability to ongoing threats. Most of the wetlands in this ecological community are likely to have been affected through agricultural activities or grazing and trampling by domestic stock and feral animals.

National listing of the Upland Wetlands recognises that their long-term survival is under threat. The listing aims to prevent further decline, and assist community and land manager efforts toward the recovery of the ecological community.

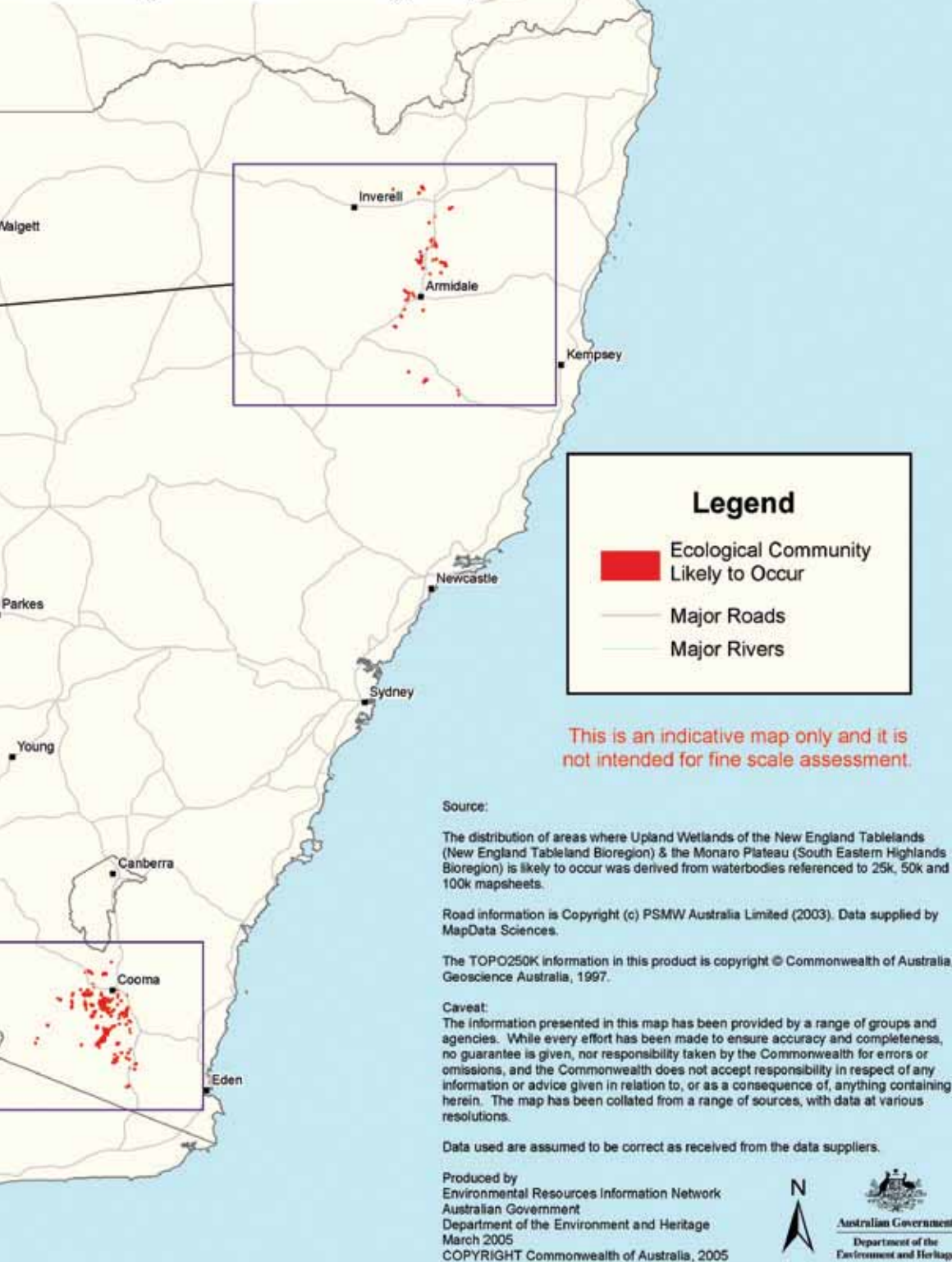
The Australian Minister for the Environment and Heritage decided to list the Upland Wetlands ecological community after considering advice from the Threatened Species Scientific Committee. The Committee is an independent scientific body that advises the Minister on the conservation status of native species and ecological communities.

The New England Tablelands component of this ecological community is also listed as endangered under the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 as the 'Upland wetlands of the drainage divide of the New England Tableland Bioregion'.





Upland Wetlands (New England Tableland Bioregion) (South Eastern Highlands Bioregion)



Nationally threatened species and ecological communities

What does the listing of the Upland Wetlands mean for land managers?

National listing means activities likely to have a significant impact upon the Upland Wetlands ecological community should be referred to the Minister for assessment and approval (unless they are subject to an exemption under the EPBC Act). Significant impacts may involve, but are not restricted to, grazing, cultivating or draining the wetlands.

Making a referral under the EPBC Act is easy. Just complete and submit the relevant form from the Department of the Environment and Heritage (see details below). Based on your referral, the Minister will determine if assessment and approval is required. If approval is not required, then you can proceed with the action, as described in your referral. If approval is required, the EPBC Act ensures that the assessment and approval process is undertaken in a timely manner.

The EPBC Act allows for some exemptions to the requirement for assessment and approval. This means that some activities may not need an assessment or approval if you meet certain requirements. Information on exemptions can be found at www.deh.gov.au/epbc/publications/exemptions.html.

What are the conservation priorities for the Upland Wetlands?

Priority conservation actions that can assist in the recovery of the ecological community are to:

- prevent further draining or damming of the ecological community through council planning, developing voluntary conservation agreements and/or developing property management programmes
- provide alternative water sources for stock
- fence wetlands, partly or entirely, to control grazing and access for stock
- avoid grazing wetlands straight after flood, after fire, when plants are flowering, seeding and establishing, during the waterbird breeding season and when the wetland is drying
- create and revegetate buffer zones around wetlands to control and filter run-off and erosion and
- remove and manage weeds.

Funding is available for projects to recover threatened species and ecological communities.

- Information about the Threatened Species Network Community grants is available at www.wwf.org.au/tsn.
- Information about Envirofund grants is available at www.nht.gov.au/envirofund.

You may also wish to participate in the development and implementation of your region's Natural Resource Management Plan. In this case, contact your local land management agency.

Where can I get further information?

Further information is available from the Department of the Environment and Heritage.

- The Department's wetlands web site: www.deh.gov.au/water/wetlands
- EPBC Act web site: www.deh.gov.au/epbc
- EPBC Act Administrative Guidelines on Significance: www.deh.gov.au/epbc/assessmentsapprovals/guidelines/index.html
- Referral form: www.deh.gov.au/epbc/assessmentsapprovals/referrals/form.html
- Community Information Unit: free call **1800 803 772**

Further information on wetland management and conservation is available from:

- Wetland Care Australia: www.wetlandcare.com.au
- The Wetlands Web site of the NSW Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources: www.dlwc.nsw.gov.au/care/wetlands
- Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment Coordinating Committee – wetlands fact sheet: www.environment.act.gov.au/Files/wetlandsoftheuppermurrumbidgee-factsheetforrurallandholders.pdf



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Printed November 2005