



**Australian Government**

**Department of Sustainability, Environment,  
Water, Population and Communities**

# **Gippsland Lakes Ramsar site**

## **Ecological Character Description**

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Chapters 8-9

Other chapters can be downloaded from:

[www.environment.gov.au/water/publications/environmental/wetlands/21-ecd.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/water/publications/environmental/wetlands/21-ecd.html)

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## 9 GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Acceptable change**, means the variation that is considered acceptable in a particular measure or feature of the ecological character of the wetland. Acceptable variation is that variation that will sustain the service, component or process to which it refers.

**Angiosperm**, means a flowering plant.

**Aquatic/marine fauna**, the context of this report relates to fauna species that spend all or the majority of their life cycle in or underwater. As such this grouping primarily relates to fish, marine reptiles, aquatic mammals such as dugong and cetaceans, and aquatic/marine invertebrates.

**Berm**, means a nearly horizontal or landward-sloping portion of a beach, formed by the deposition of sediment by storm waves.

**Charophytes**, are a group of green algae that are the most closely related algae to flowering plants.

**Congener**, means species within the same genus.

**Ecological character**, defined under Resolution IX.1 Annex A: 2005 of the Ramsar Convention as, the combination of the ecosystem components, processes and benefits/services that characterise the wetland at a given point in time.

**Epiphytes**, means algae, larger in size than periphyton, that grows on seagrass leaves.

**IMCRA bioregion**, refers to the Interim Marine and Coastal Regionalisation for Australia (Mesoscale) to the 200 meter isobath and derived from biological and physical data, (for example, coastal geomorphology, tidal attributes, oceanography, bathymetry and intertidal invertebrates).

**Microphytobenthos**, means the surface biofilms of photosynthetic micro-algae and bacteria.

**National ECD Framework**, refers to the document entitled, 'National Framework and Guidance for Describing the Ecological Character of Australia's Ramsar Wetlands – Module 2 of the National Guidelines for Ramsar Wetlands – Implementing the Ramsar Convention in Australia' (DEWHA 2008) and its successive documents as endorsed by the Natural Resource Management (NRM) Ministerial Council.

**Parapatry speciation**, is a form of speciation that occurs due to variations in mating frequency of a population within a continuous geographical area.

**Periphyton**, means thin biofilms of microbes growing on seagrass leaves.

**Ramsar Nomination Criteria**, refers to the nine criteria for the listing of a site as internationally significant under the provisions of the Ramsar Convention. Also referred throughout the report as the nomination criteria for the site.

**Resident species**, in the context of waterbirds, are species that remain permanently in Australia but undertake localised migrations often in response to seasonal or climatic events.

**Sedimentation**, means the process of deposition of sediment of any size. This is often colloquially referred to as siltation, but this term implies that only silt-sized material is deposited.

**Shorebirds**, as used in this report, refers to both resident and migratory species which are ecologically dependent upon wetlands from the following families: Scolopacidae; Burhinidae; Haematopodidae; Recurvirostridae; Charadriidae; and Glareolidae. Shorebirds form a sub-set of the waterbird grouping.

**Values**, means the perceived benefits to society, either direct or indirect that result from wetland functions. These values include human welfare, environmental quality and wildlife support.

**Waterbirds**, as used in this report, refers to those species which are ecologically dependent upon wetlands from the following families: Anseranatidae, Anatidae, Podicipedidae, Anhingidae, Phalacrocoracidae, Pelecanidae, Ardeidae, Threskiornithidae, Ciconiidae, Gruidae, Rallidae, Scolopacidae, Rostratulidae, Jacanidae, Burhinidae, Haematopodidae, Recurvirostridae, Charadriidae, Glareolidae, Laridae and Sternidae (after Kingsford and Norman 2002; Wetlands International 2006). Only those species of gulls (Laridae) and terns (Sternidae) which make extensive use of shallow, inshore waters or inland wetlands are included. Whilst at least some other species of other families traditionally regarded as “seabirds” (that is, Spheniscidae, Phaethontidae, Sulidae, Fregatidae, Stercorariidae and Alcidae) also make use of shallow, inshore waters (and thus could be therefore be considered as waterbirds), these have not been included in the waterbird group (following precedent within Wetlands International 2006).

**Wetlands**, is used in this report in the context of the definition under the Ramsar Convention which includes, areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres.

**Wetland-dependent terrestrial fauna**, in the context of this report relates to fauna species that occur within or otherwise are dependent on wetland habitats but do not spend the majority of their life cycle underwater (for example, non-aquatic species). As such this grouping primarily relates to birds, amphibians such as frogs, non-aquatic mammals such as water mouse, non-aquatic reptiles and terrestrial invertebrates.

**Wetland flora**, in the context of this report relates to flora species that are characterised as wetland or wetland-dependent species or populations.

**Wetland ecosystem components**, as defined in the National ECD Framework, are the physical, chemical and biological parts or features of a wetland.

**Wetland ecosystem processes**, as defined in the National ECD Framework, are the dynamic forces within the ecosystem between organisms, populations and the non-living environment. Interactions can be physical, chemical or biological.

**Wetland ecosystem benefits or services** (includes the term ecosystem services), as defined in the National ECD Framework, are the benefits that people receive from wetland ecosystems. In general, benefits and services are based on or underpinned by wetland components and processes and can be direct (for example, food for humans or livestock) or indirect (for example, wetland provides habitat for biota which contribute to biodiversity).