

# River Red Gum

*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*



Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commercial Services.

Map is not intended to indicate spatial distribution of the species, only the bioregions in which the species is found.

River Red Gums are large, single stemmed eucalypt trees. They can grow up to 45m tall but usually grow to 20–30m and they can live for 500–1000 years. There are two subspecies; a northern and a southern. The durability of River Red Gum wood and its natural resistance to termites meant it was used heavily by European settlers for railway sleepers, mine shafts and wharves. Today, they are the most commonly planted tree in arid and semi-arid areas of the world (mostly in timber plantations).

Like all eucalypts, River Red Gums have survival mechanisms that can help them through tough times. Seedlings can drop their leaves to save water, and grow new ones when water arrives. If damaged, they can grow a new shoot from the base of the stem.

Red Gum forests and wetlands provide valuable habitat for biodiversity. These trees are important breeding, nesting and feeding grounds for a range of bird species. Native mammals, such as echidnas and kangaroos, make their homes in the shelter of these trees. They also provide homes for rare and threatened species like Sugar Gliders (*Petaurus breviceps*) and Carpet Pythons (*Morelia spilota*).

## Reproduction

A forest of River Red Gums can produce 250 million seeds per hectare per year. Ants, and other insects, take most of these, and the ones that are left need to be there at just the right time to germinate. If seeds fall too early, before the floods, they become submerged and die. Fall too late and they don't have enough time to grow before the dry heat of summer arrives.

## Habitat

River Red Gums grow near wetlands, and particularly along river plains. Along low flood plains they are often the only tree species present, forming open forests. Their name originates from this habitat as well as the red colour of their timber.

## Threats

Changed flood and flow patterns in the River Murray due to irrigation and storage lead to drought or permanent flooding, both of which can kill River Red Gums. Historical and current logging, grazing animals eating seedlings, and changed fire regimes are other threats. Feral pigs disturb large habitat areas by digging and wallowing.



Scarred for life! Aboriginal people used the bark of River Red Gums to make shelters, canoes and shields. They did all this without killing the tree, but the evidence can still be seen today.

### Conservation

You can help the River Red Gums by:

- finding out more about the River Murray system and how important it is to life in Australia
- being careful with your water use at home. Check out the SA Water website
- getting involved with revegetation projects like the Million Trees Project.



Photo by Brian Walters

River Red Gum



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## For further information

### Public enquiries

For more local information on any of the species in this resource please contact your nearest Natural Resource Centre office on:

**Eastwood:** (08) 8273 9100

**Gawler:** (08) 8523 7700

**Lobethal:** (08) 8389 5900

**Willunga:** (08) 8550 3400

### Education enquiries

For teachers wanting more information about environmental education resources and opportunities please contact the relevant NRM Education sub regional team on:

**Northern Adelaide:** (08) 8406 8289

**Barossa:** (08) 8563 8436

**Central Adelaide:** (08) 8234 7255

**Southern Adelaide:** (08) 8384 0176

**Southern Fleurieu:** (08) 8551 0524

