



Water

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Waterholes, rock holes and springs

Waterholes

A waterhole is a depression (sunken area of land) where water collects. Waterholes often become important places for aquatic habitats and for animals to drink from, particularly in arid (dry) river systems and in times of drought.

There are two large waterholes in the South Australian Arid Lands: Cullyamurra and Algebuckina.

Cullyamurra Waterhole is a permanent waterhole located in the Cooper Creek catchment (about 10 kilometres from Innamincka in the far north-east of South Australia) and is part of the Innamincka Regional Reserve. It is the most important refuge waterhole in the Arid Lands region and is approximately 30 metres deep in some sections. It supports up to 12 different native fish species and is an important safe haven during times of drought.

Algebuckina Waterhole is situated on the Neales River (about 55 kilometres south-east of Oodnadatta). It is a permanent waterhole that in times of drought, long after other waterholes have become dry, provides a critical safe haven for fish, birds and other native animals. For tourists travelling the Oodnadatta Track, it is the location of the longest bridge in South Australia which takes the Ghan train over the Neales River en route between Adelaide and Darwin.





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Rock holes

Rock holes are a surface water feature where water is held in a rock or rocky area. Rock holes are of significant value to Aboriginal people living in arid areas of Australia. They provide a crucial water supply in an otherwise dry landscape where there is little permanent surface water, assisting in travel across the landscape and access to a larger range of resources. In the early years of farming, before there were bores and wells, they were also important water resources for livestock (farm animals)

Springs

Springs occur naturally where water comes to the surface from an underground aquifer. The amount of water that flows from springs can depend on many factors including the water pressure in the aquifer, the amount of rainfall and the amount of water humans take from the underground aquifer.

Usually the water in springs is very clear, but it can be discoloured due to the naturally occurring minerals in the ground.

Drinking from waterholes, rock holes and springs

Not all water is safe to drink. Water in waterholes, rock holes and springs has not been treated and so we should not drink straight from these sources.