

MEET THE GIANTS

First Creek and the Red Gum *by Tiago Miranda*

Interesting figure settled in a notorious contrast in plain South Australia within history and deforestation holding hands. From Hutchinson Park, you can reach First Creek that once was a flowing rich river that indigenous people would not starve nor lack of fishing among large trunks of river red gum. Back in time, this tree was used for canoes, bowls, shields, and other utensils. Its redness wood contains very high levels of chemicals such as polyphenols, which are a natural antibiotic when combined with air. Despite its size and old appearance, it can survive for centuries by having extensive roots, which contain a spongy, air-filled tissue called aerenchyma that allows for the accumulation and transport of oxygen in waterlogged soils, making them great adaptive creatures whatever are the circumstances.



Source: T.Miranda 2020

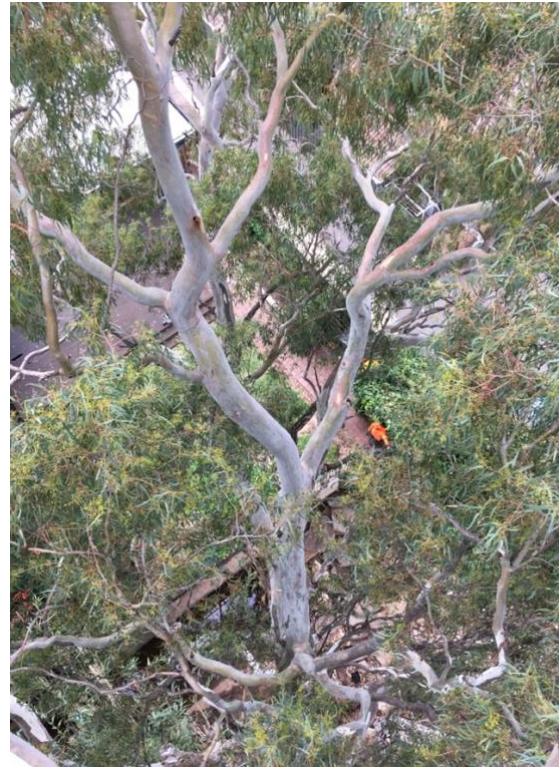


View from mid-canopy / Source: T.Miranda 2020

Most recognised as fighters of the drought and soil dominators, producing a water-soluble chemical that is washed from its leaves by rain. A phenomenon called allelopathy inhibits the growth of other plants surround, including its seedling under the canopy. As a climber, you must notice in midst summer the humming noise around the canopy, attracting so many bees that it can be heard many metres away, almost letting it takes off. *"The river red gum has been the subject of repeated government inquiries over its conservation, use and management,"* Dr Colloff said. Yet indeed, this tree has curved socio-economic and environmental tensions within values of floodplains and rivers landscapes in Australia. Wonder why is so valuable?

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"Despite this, we know remarkably little about the basics of this species: its longevity; how deep its roots go; what proportion of its seedlings survive to adulthood; the diversity of organisms associated with it, and the nature of those associations." Dr Colloff said on his book *Flooded Forest and Desert Creek, Ecology and History of the River Red Gum*. A barter within a culture of exploitation to one of conservation, sustainable use and multiple values have been implemented in the recent years, promoting more deeply consensus concerning this widespread species around Australia and the world, once named "*camaldulensis*" as a reference to a private estate garden near the Camaldoli monastery in Naples.



Inner canopy snapshot / Source: T.Miranda 2020



Source: T.Miranda 2020

Besides, this tree has most attraction by climbers looking for a diversify canopy with varies options of redirect and anchor points, also gives a lovely snuggle on downhill limb walks, making end tips at easy-reach. From the top perspective, political and cultural reason cannot be observed clearly, but still a controversial topic. Identifying this species as an important cultural asset must be, above all, our priority followed by several storytellers along the track. *"This provides us with a greater understanding of the value of this tree as part of our common heritage and how we can manage river red gum forests under a drier future climate with reduced water availability,"* Dr Colloff said.