



Tales of the Todd - Fact Sheet

Wetland Soils

The shape of any landscape creates unique drainage conditions which influence the formation and characteristics of soil. Soils are often classified according to the rate at which they drain water.

Soils generally are usually either organic or mineral. Organic soils contain lots of partially decayed plant and animal matter. Mineral soils contain less organic matter and more sand, silt and clay.

The presence of organic matter has a marked effect on both the physical and chemical properties of soils. Organic matter acts like a sponge and absorbs large quantities of water that would otherwise run off the land. On the other hand when rain strikes bare soil containing little organic matter it breaks the soil down and washes it away readily.

Due to the steep slopes and sparse vegetation of the Todd catchment, significant amounts of sediment are washed away carried along the Todd River with storm runoff. This sediment is carried downstream with the river flow as suspended sediment, mainly clays and silts (which is why the river looks brown when it flows) and along the riverbed as bed load, mainly sand and gravel.

There is little opportunity for the development of organic soils in a dryland river system. Areas where there are permanent waterholes are the only places along the Todd where you are likely to find this kind of soil. This will influence the kinds of plants found in such areas.

Drawing of
"Todd River"
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