Willandra Lakes

Willandra Lakes are located in south-western New South Wales. Now a string of dry lake beds, they were once part of a large wetland teeming with life. About 25 000 years ago, the area received much more rainfall than it does today. It was home to a large number of Aboriginal people. They lived on fish from the lake, and plants and animals from the surrounding forests.

The climate gradually changed, the area became semi-arid and the lakes dried up. All that remains today is a string of dry lake beds surrounded by scrub. Evidence of ancient Aboriginal life has been found at one of the lake beds—Lake Mungo.

This map shows the area covered by the World Heritage site within which the Willandra Lakes Region lies. Lake Mungo is one of four main dry lake beds, although there are many smaller lake beds.

Over thousands of years, wind and water have worn away the sand and clay deposits on the eastern edge of Lake Mungo to form strange shapes. This is now called the Walls of China.

The flat area beyond the sand dunes was once the lake bed. Lake Mungo is about 20 kilometres long and 10 kilometres wide.