



Channel Country Australia

Australia's Channel Country is full of hundreds of channels, as the Georgina, Burke, and Hamilton rivers merge into the very broad floodplain of Eyre Creek. The land is flat and the drainage is poor, which encourages semi-permanent wetlands to form at the meeting points of the rivers.

These wide floodplains in Queensland are unique on the planet. Scientists think they are caused by the extreme variation in water and sediment discharges from the rivers. In many years there is no rainfall at all, and the rivers are effectively non-existent. In years of modest rainfall, the main channels will carry some water, sometimes spilling over into narrow water holes known as billabongs.

Every few decades, the floodplain carries extremely high discharges of water. For instance, tropical storms to the north can lead to great water flows that inundate the entire width of the floodplain. On such occasions, the floodplain appears as series of brown and green water surfaces with only tree tops indicating the location of the islands. Such is the case in this image taken from the International Space Station in September 2016.