How rare and threatened flora management is enhanced by vegetation survey

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Initially the significant interaction between plot based vegetation surveys and rare and threatened flora management is not oblivious but relates to the general poor knowledge of species distributions across this vast State. While major biomes are well delineated detailed distribution information on most of the estimated 12,000 taxa occurring in Western Australia is still lacking. Plot based vegetation surveys have been undertaken at variety of scales across Western Australia for the last 25 years. One of the recurring patterns found from these surveys is the discovery of new populations of rare and threatened flora in addition to the identification of new taxa that are in some cases are subsequently listed as threatened. The recently completed surveys of 24 Banded Iron Formation Ranges established some 1217 plots and recording over 900 taxa. Twenty one taxa were recognized new, and more than 100 new populations of DRF and priority taxa were found. Several of the new taxa were quickly added to the threatened species list as their localised distributions overlapped proposed mining developments. These surveys have also documented ranges extensions of threatened taxa previously thought to have very restricted distributions. The systematic nature of plot based vegetation survey ensures that distributional information of cryptic as well as common taxa is captured in both survey and herbarium databases. The distributional information on rare and threatened taxa captured by plot based vegetation survey has considerably enhanced rare flora management over the last 25 years.

Threatened Species Research Forum

Western Australian Ecology Centre

9th July 2010

A Review of WA Government Research into Threatened Species