

Taxonomy for conservation – the role of taxonomic research in the conservation of rare and threatened flora in Western Australia

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Western Australia has a very large number of known threatened species of plants: 3227 taxa have a conservation rating under the Department of Environment and Conservation's conservation codes, 393 of which are threatened flora (Declared Rare Flora). We also have many known but currently un-named, and many still-undiscovered taxa. On average, between 50 and 100 new taxa are added to the State's flora every year as a result of biological surveys and herbarium studies. Currently 608 known, un-named taxa have a conservation rating, including 18 DRF. Given that most of the more common species have now been described, a very high proportion of newly discovered taxa are restricted in range and are rare and hence potentially threatened. Taxonomy – the science of resolving and naming taxa – is an underpinning science for ecology, genetics and conservation studies. The Western Australian Herbarium has a strong focus on describing and documenting the State's plants, algae, lichens and fungi with a particular focus on conservation taxa, since it is not possible to adequately conserve a taxon until it is adequately described scientifically. Recent examples of this important role include the description of 17 new taxa with restricted distributions centred around Banded Ironstone Formation ranges in the Midwest, many of which are prospective for minerals, the description of new threatened taxa from the Ravensthorpe-Bandalup Hill area and the Goldfields region greenstones belts, and the recent recognition of a number of new and highly restricted taxa on prospective uranium-bearing calcrete deposits. The Department of Environment and Conservation has a clear and key role in recognizing, characterising and describing these species, in ensuring their protection, and in providing tools to allow them to be recognised, surveyed, and their conservation needs assessed. This work helps provide certainty for environment, community government and industry.

Threatened Species Research Forum



Western Australian Ecology Centre

9th July 2010

A Review of WA Government Research into Threatened Species