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Fitzgerald's mulla-mulla

E n d a n g e r e d f l o r a o f W e s t e r n A u s t r a l i a

If you think you've seen this plant, please call the Department of Environment and Conservation's (DEC's) Geraldton District on (08) 9921 5955, Moora District on (08) 9652 1911, Avon-Mortlock District on (08) 9622 8940, Yilgarn District on (08) 9041 2488 or Great Southern District on (08) 9881 9200.

Fitzgerald's mulla-mulla (*Ptilotus fasciculatus*) is a perennial plant with short leafy branches and pink and white feathery flowers. The vegetative part of the plant is prostrate and mat-forming, while the flowers are upright. The leaves are narrow, 10 to 14 millimetres long and hairless with pointed tips and sheathing bases. Leaves are crowded on the stem.

The spherical flower-spikes are about 2.5 centimetres in diameter on a white, wooly stem up to 13 centimetres tall. The floral parts have long, soft, shaggy white hairs, giving the feathery appearance to the flower spike. The floral parts are tinged with pink. Flowering occurs from September to November, with peak flowering in November.

Fitzgerald's mulla-mulla is found on white-grey sandy loam or clay in moist saline conditions with gravel. It is often found near salt lakes and occurs among open shrub land.

Fitzgerald's mulla-mulla is declared as rare flora and ranked as endangered in Western Australia. It is listed as endangered under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Fitzgerald's mulla-mulla was first described in 1912 by W.V. Fitzgerald from a collection made in Cunderdin in 1907. It was presumed extinct until it was collected again in 1987, however these specimens were initially incorrectly



Fitzgerald's mulla-mulla. Photo – Andrew Brown

identified and were not corrected as Fitzgerald's mulla-mulla until 2000.

The species is dispersed across a wide area in the Midwest and Wheatbelt regions of southern WA, occurring in 11 populations between Yuna (near Geraldton) in the north and Kondinin in the south. It occurs in areas around Gunyidi, Carnamah, Coorow, Dangin and Kwolyin. Much of the species' former range has been cleared for agriculture so although the range of the species is

large, the 11 populations are isolated from each other.

Two of the populations contain more than a thousand plants, however, most populations consist of only a small number of plants, placing the species at risk from the effects of low genetic diversity.

DEC has set up district threatened flora recovery teams to coordinate recovery actions that address the greatest threats to the survival of the species in the wild (see overleaf).

The main threats to the species are increasing salinity, grazing from rabbits and kangaroos, low genetic diversity and isolated populations.

The species is currently known from 11 populations and DEC is keen to know of any others.

If you are unable to contact the district offices on the above numbers, please phone DEC's Species and Communities Branch on (08) 9334 0455.

Recovery of a species

DEC is committed to ensuring that critically endangered taxa do not become extinct in the wild. This is done through the preparation of a Recovery Plan or Interim Recovery Plan (IRP), which outline the recovery actions that are required to urgently address those threatening processes most affecting the ongoing survival of the threatened species in the wild and begin the recovery process.

IRPs are prepared by DEC and implemented by regional or district recovery teams consisting of representatives from DEC, Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, community groups, private landowners, local shires and various government organisations.



Department of Environment and Conservation

Our environment, our future



Natural Heritage Trust
Helping Communities Helping Australia
An Australian Government Initiative

Fitzgerald's mulla-mulla

Endangered flora of Western Australia



Habitat of Fitzgerald's mulla-mulla: open shrub land adjoining a salt lake. Photo – Gemma Phelan

IRPs will be deemed a success if the number of individuals within the population and/or the number of populations have increased.

This project is funded by the Australian and State governments' investment through the Natural Heritage Trust, administered in the Midwest Region by the Northern Agricultural Catchments Council.

Avon Catchment Council projects and activities are delivered with investment from the Australian and State governments' National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality and the Natural Heritage Trust.

Recovery actions that have been, and will be, progressively implemented to protect the species include:

- informing land managers of plant locations and population significance;
- installation of declared rare flora markers on roadside populations to ensure road workers in the vicinity of the plants are aware of the species and its significance;
- seed collection for permanent storage at DEC's Threatened Flora Seed Centre;
- regular monitoring of the condition of each population; and
- surveys for additional populations.