

LIBRARY

Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions

This PDF has been created for digital preservation. It may be used for research but is not suitable for other purposes. It may be superseded by a more current version or just be out-of-date and have no relevance to current situations.

003988

Elegant spider orchid

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
CALM Geraldton District on (08) 9921 5955**

Commonly known as elegant spider orchid, *Caladenia elegans* is one of the most attractive spider orchids found in Western Australia. Standing up to 30 cm high, it has up to three, large creamy-yellow flowers, each with a red-striped labellum (the lip or tongue of the flower). Flowers appear between late July and late August.

Elegant spider orchid closely resembles the common white spider orchid, *Caladenia vulgata*, which differs in its cream or white flowers and preference for well-drained soils further upslope. Hybrids occur at the margins between the populations.

Elegant spider orchid grows among open melaleuca scrub in areas of low heath in winter-wet depressions.

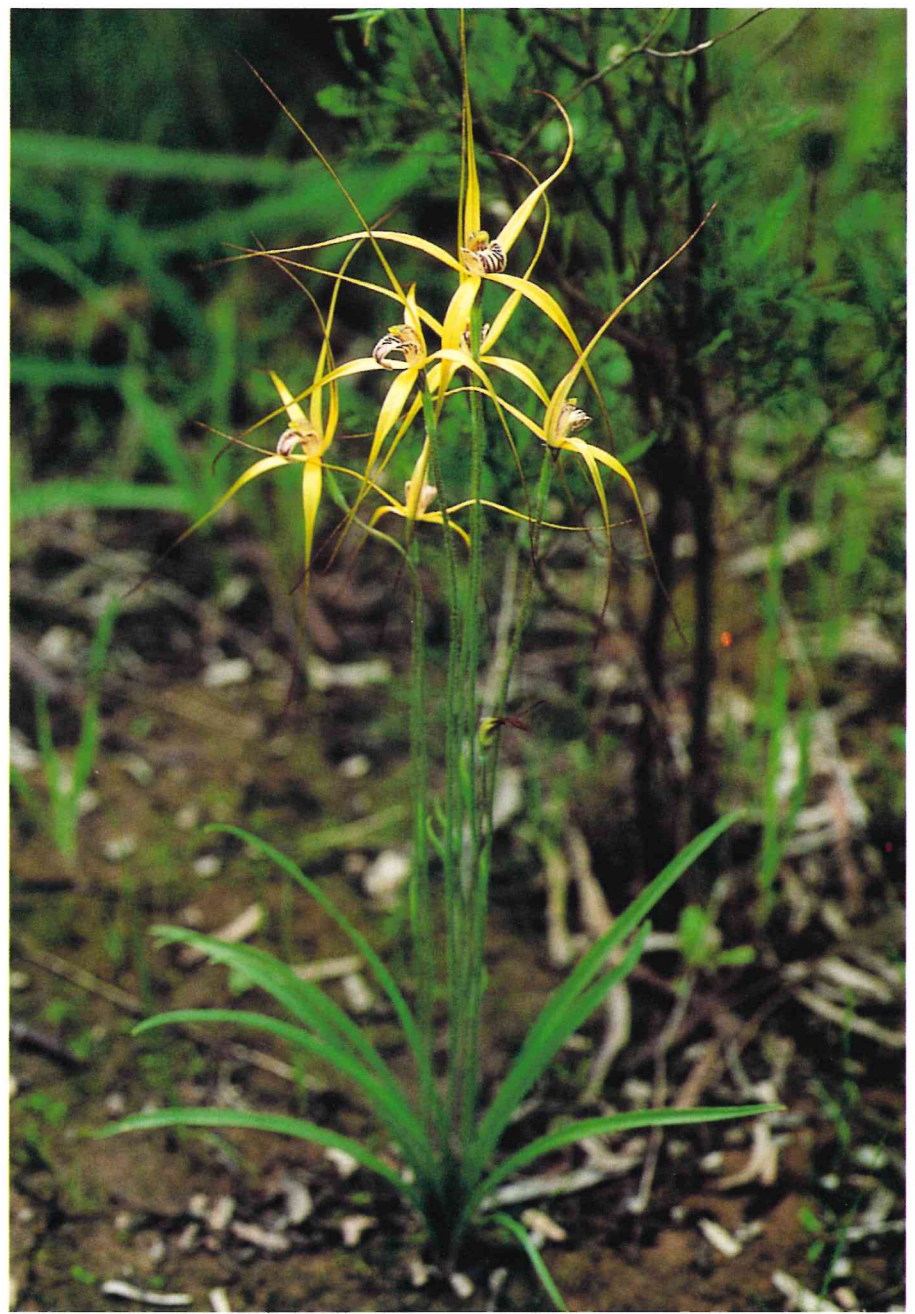
The species was first collected in 1982 from west of Northampton. Since then, only five other small populations have been found. Unfortunately, the largest of these was destroyed by clearing soon after its discovery.

Elegant spider orchid was declared as Rare Flora in 1991 and ranked as Critically Endangered in 1995.

CALM has set up the Geraldton District Threatened Flora Recovery Team to co-ordinate recovery actions addressing the most threatening processes affecting the species' survival in the wild (See overleaf).

The species is known from just a few populations in areas where much of the natural bushland has been cleared for agriculture and CALM is keen to know of any others.

If unable to contact the District office on the above number, please phone CALM's Wildlife Branch on (08) 9334 0422.



Elegant spider orchid often grows in clumps of up to eight or more plants. Photo – Andrew Brown

Recovery of a Species



CALM 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 (RP) or Interim Recovery Plan (IRP), which outlines the recovery actions that are required to urgently address those threatening processes most affecting the ongoing survival of threatened taxa in the wild and begin the recovery process.

IRPs are prepared by CALM and implemented by Regional or District Recovery teams consisting of representatives from CALM, Kings Park and Botanic Garden, community groups, private landowners, local Shires and various government organisations.

PAM01293

Elegant spider orchid

Essential recovery actions that have been implemented to protect the species include:

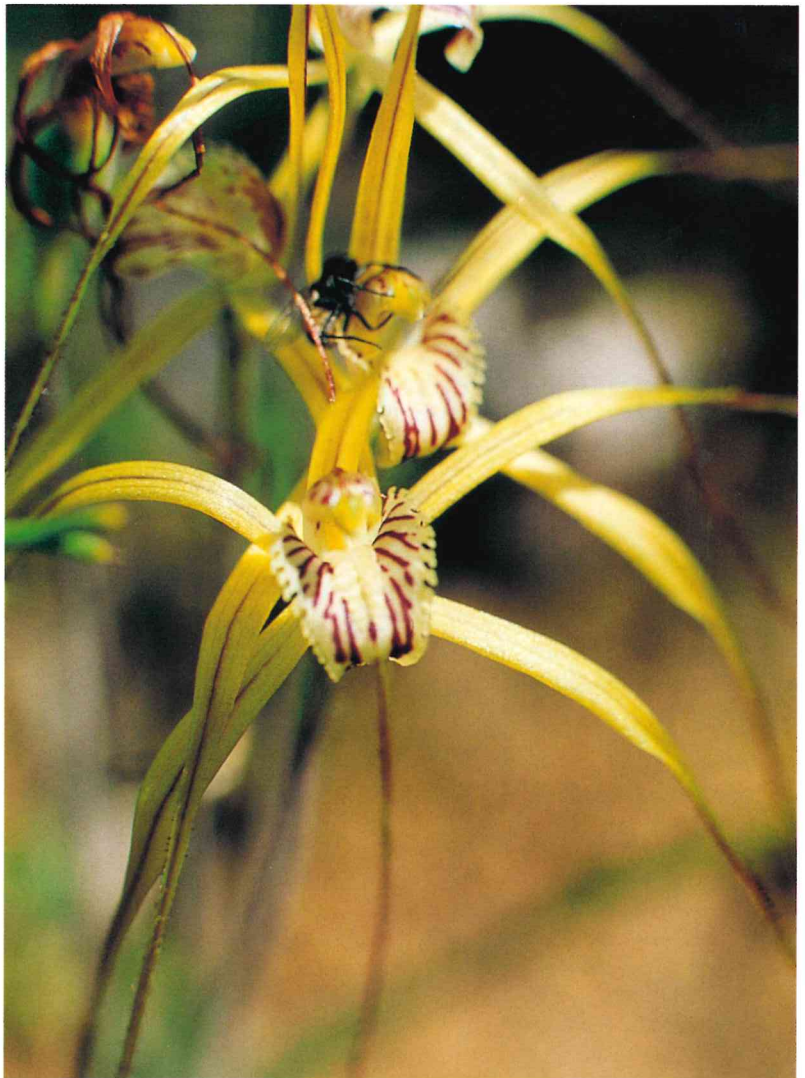
Protection from current threats: The relocation of signs that mark the site of each population; control of introduced weeds; redirection of a drainage channel; control of frequent fire; fencing of populations to protect them from grazing; and regular monitoring of the health of each population.

Protection from future threats: Ensuring that relevant authorities, land owners and CALM personnel are aware of the species' presence and the need to protect it, and that all are familiar with the threatening processes identified in the Interim Recovery Plan.

Desirable recovery actions, which are progressively being implemented, include:

The monitoring of feral pig activity; leaving buffers of natural bush around populations; habitat rehabilitation; conducting further surveys; collection and storage of seed in CALM's Threatened Flora Seed Centre; maintenance of live plants away from the wild (i.e. in botanical gardens); researching the biology and ecology of elegant spider orchid; and enhancing plant numbers by removal of a limiting factor, or by direct propagation and translocation techniques.

IRPs will be deemed a success if essential recovery actions have been implemented, and identified threatening processes have been removed within three years of their approval.



Note the large creamy-yellow flowers and red-striped labellum of this species. Photo – Emma Holland



A colony of plants growing in their natural habitat west of Northampton. Photo – Andrew Brown

