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Hinged dragon 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 Moora District on (08) 9651 1424 or CALM Merredin District on (08) 9041 2488.

Commonly known as the hinged dragon orchid, *Drakonorchis drakeoides* is an inconspicuous plant with a 20 to 30-cm tall flower stem containing a single (rarely two), small, green and maroon flower that is produced between August and October. The species can be recognised by the hanging petals and sepals and the hinged labellum (the lip or tongue of the flower).

Hinged dragon orchid is confined to the elevated margins of seasonally wet salt lakes, which have variable soils, mainly grey sandy-loams.

The species was first collected near Meckering by John Tonkinson in the 1960s, but wasn't seen again until 1984, when Robert Bates found a small population near Goomalling. It is now known to have a distribution that extends from Coorow to Beacon and southwards to Goomalling.

Hinged dragon orchid was declared Rare in 1991, and ranked as Critically Endangered in 1995.

CALM has set up Threatened Flora Recovery Teams in the Moora and Merredin Districts to co-ordinate recovery actions addressing the most threatening processes affecting the species' survival in the wild (See overleaf).

Hinged dragon orchid is currently known from several, mainly small, populations, many of which are threatened by rising salinity, and CALM is keen to know of any others.

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



Hinged dragon orchid has one or rarely two small flowers with unusual hinged, insect-like lips.
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.

Hinged dragon orchid

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

Protection from current threats: The erection of Rare Flora markers that indicate the site of each population; fencing of populations; control of goats within a nature reserve; rehabilitation of the habitat to reduce the impact on the species from rising salinity and erosion; control of introduced weeds 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 development of a fire protection plan; the collection and storage of seed in CALM's Threatened Flora Seed Centre; the maintenance of live plants away from the wild (i.e. in botanical gardens); conducting further surveys; researching the biology and ecology of the species; and enhancing plant numbers by the amelioration of a limiting factor, or by direct propagation and translocation techniques.



Plants are often found in small clumps. Photo – Andrew Brown

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.



Hinged dragon orchid is found on elevated margins of seasonally wet salt lakes. Habitat is tall melaleuca and acacia shrublands. Photo – Robyn Phillimore

