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Mallee box

003988

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 have seen this plant, please call
CALM Geraldton District on (08) 9921 5955.**

Commonly known as mallee box, *Eucalyptus cuprea* is the only eucalypt ranked as Critically Endangered in Western Australia. It is four to six metres tall, with flaky dark grey bark on the lower half of the trunk and smooth coppery or grey bark above. This species is distinguished by glossy dark green adult leaves, sparse oil glands, and small white flowers that are arranged in inflorescences at the end of branchlets. Flowering occurs between August and November.

The first collection of this species was made by G. Brockway in 1952, from between Northampton and Lynton. The second collection, by C. Gardner, was from near the Hutt River in 1959. Neither of these populations has been relocated. Various other collections were made between 1970-86 and include the type collection made in 1984 by I. Brooker. It was known as *Eucalyptus* sp. Northampton, until 1993 when S. Hopper and I. Brooker named it *Eucalyptus cuprea*.

Mallee box is known from four populations over a range of approximately 80 kilometres. The species is distributed throughout the Northampton area, growing in scattered populations on rises in brown sandy loam with sandstone or granite, and more rarely in red-brown clayey loam with laterite. It has also been recorded on a clay flat.

The main threat and cause of rarity of mallee box is clearing for agriculture. Other threats include road and crop maintenance, insect damage, inappropriate fire regimes, grazing of seedlings and weed encroachment.

Due to the small number of individuals and populations and threats associated with overclearing and growing in a specialised habitat, mallee box was declared as Rare Flora in September 1987 and was ranked as Critically Endangered in May 1998.

CALM has set up the Geraldton District Threatened Flora Recovery Team to coordinate recovery actions that address



The small white flowers occur on the ends of branchlets. Photo – Andrew Brown



Inflexed stamens on flowers of mallee box. Photo – Rebecca Evans

threats to the survival of the species in the wild (see overleaf).

The species is currently known from just four populations 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.

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, Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, community groups, private landowners, local shires and various government organisations.

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

Protection from current threats: installing fencing; control of weeds; conducting further surveys; control of insect infestation; and regular monitoring of the health of the populations.

Protection from future threats: the development of a fire management strategy; collection and storage of seed at CALM's Threatened Flora Seed Centre; maintenance of live plants away from the wild (in botanical gardens); and researching the biology and ecology of the species. Other actions include ensuring that relevant authorities, landowners and CALM personnel are aware of the species' presence and the need to protect it, and that all are familiar with the threats identified in the Interim Recovery Plan.



The habitat of mallee box. Photo – Rebecca Evans

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



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Smooth grey bark on upper branches of mallee box. Photo – Rebecca Evans



Department of Conservation and Land Management