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Department of Biodiversity,  
Conservation and Attractions

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# Branched hemigenia

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

## The main threats to this species are:

- Road, drain and powerline maintenance – these threats have the potential to threaten both plants and habitat at the two wild populations. Threats include grading, construction of drainage channels, the mowing of roadside vegetation and general disturbance. Several of these actions also encourage weed invasion.
- Salinity and prolonged waterlogging – both wild populations occur in a seasonally wet/waterlogged area that is showing signs of increasing salinity, including the death of native vegetation and an increase in salt-tolerant species such as *Callistemon phoeniceus*. Assessment and monitoring of the populations is required.
- Weed invasion – this is a minor threat but requires ongoing monitoring to ensure the threat does not escalate. Weeds suppress early plant growth by competing for soil moisture, nutrients and light. They also exacerbate grazing pressure and increase the fire hazard due to increased fuel load.
- Inappropriate fire regimes – it is not known what the fire response of the species is. However, frequent fire would most likely destroy populations if it occurs before regenerating or before juvenile plants have reached maturity, produced seed and replenished the soil seed bank. Conversely, infrequent fires may be required for the species to regenerate from soil stored seed and root stock.



## Essential recovery actions that have been implemented to protect the species

An IRP was developed for this species in 2003 and, as part of this IRP, a number of recovery actions are being implemented, including:

- notifying landholders about the location and threatened status of the species and their legal responsibility to protect it
- installing DRF markers for public awareness and to alert people working in the vicinity to the presence of DRF, to avoid work that may damage plants or their habitat
- public awareness raising and promotion, including dashboard stickers and posters describing the significance of DRF markers
- collecting seed and cuttings for propagation and the subsequent establishment of two translocation sites
- undertaking surveys to identify additional populations in the area (unfortunately these have been unsuccessful)
- ongoing monitoring and management activities, in collaboration with community volunteers.



Where populations occur on lands other than those managed by DEC, permission has been or will be sought from appropriate land managers before recovery actions are carried out and all works will be undertaken in collaboration and communication with the landholder and the local community.

**If you think you've seen this plant, please call the Flora Conservation Officer, at the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) Great Southern District Office on (08) 9881 9200.**

Top right: Branched hemigenia has leaves in whorls of three and seed capsules that are borne on short stalks. Photo – Bethea Loudon

Above right: Fencing of translocation sites protects the seedlings and their habitat from rabbit grazing and burrowing. Photo – Bethea Loudon



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*Branched hemigenia can be difficult to see amongst other vegetation.*

Photo – Bethea Loudon

Commonly known as the branched hemigenia, *Hemigenia ramosissima* was first discovered by James Drummond more than 150 years ago. It then seemingly disappeared from botanical records, only to be rediscovered in 1996 by Val Crowley (a flora volunteer for DEC) near West Arthur in the south-west of WA, purely by chance.

It is a loosely spreading, slender shrub growing to approximately 0.5 metres high. Its leaves are about one centimetre long, in whorls of three. They are nearly stalkless, linear, with a blunt or pointed tip, and are rather rigid. The flowers are a pale purple-lilac, borne singly in the leaf axils on short stalks. They are broadly bell-shaped



*The pale purple-lilac flowers of branched hemigenia are borne from October to November.*

Photo – Bethea Loudon

and two-lipped, the lower lip, shortly or broadly three-lobed, the upper lip distinctly two-lobed and curved over the tube.

Without these very distinctive flowers borne in October to November, it is easy to understand how this species was thought lost for so many years. Its slender branches and leaves are very hard to spot among the other heathland species it is associated with.

There are two known wild populations of the branched hemigenia, both

located on nature reserves. There are now also two translocation sites, which were established in 2007 in an effort to bolster the existing populations of this Declared Rare species, classified as Critically Endangered by the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

The branched hemigenia grows in low lying, winter wet areas with grey, loamy clay soils in the Arthur River area. It is found in open shrub mallee of *Eucalyptus spathulata* over heath of *Melaleuca uncinata* and *M. acuminata*. Associated species include *Anthotium humile*, *Austrostipa elegantissima*, *Borya* sp., *Comesperma confertum*, *Meeboldina cana*, *Melaleuca lateriflora*, *Neurachne alopecuroides*, and *Ptilotus manglesii*.

DEC is very interested in locating more populations of this species and in improving the condition of existing populations. If you have any information that you may be able to share with DEC to aid in the discovery of further populations, please contact DEC at the phone number above.

## Recovery of a species

DEC is committed to ensuring that Critically Endangered taxa do not become extinct in the wild. This is achieved 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 DEC and implemented by the Regional or District Recovery teams consisting of representatives from DEC, community groups, private landholders, local Shires and various government organisations.



Department of  
Environment and Conservation

