

# Enthusiasts rediscover 'extinct' plant

by Alanna Chant

**THE dedication of two Kalbarri plant enthusiasts has led to the rediscovery of a plant species that has not been recorded for almost 130 years.**

The species is *Stachystemon nematophorus* that until now was listed as presumed extinct. It previously was known only from two collections, one made by James Drummond from Moore-Murchison Rivers in 1859 and another by Augustus Oldfield from the Murchison River before 1873.

But recently, Don and Barbara Bellairs have had confirmation that a plant they collected in Kalbarri National Park is the species that has not been formally recorded since then.

*Stachystemon nematophorus*—the species doesn't have a common name—is a slender, erect shrub between 30 and 60 cm tall. It has narrow leaves about 12 mm long with very small flowers that grow in clusters at the ends of branches. Little is known about the plant's biology and ecology and the rediscovery will provide a good opportunity for study.

The finding by Mr and Mrs Bellairs has enabled the identity of another specimen collected in the Kalbarri area by Andrew Brown and Steve Van Leeuwen of the Department of Conservation and Land Management in 1985 to be confirmed.

Mr and Mrs Bellairs have had a keen interest in wildflowers and the natural environment for many years and began collecting flora specimens and

creating a herbarium 30 years ago.

The Bellairs moved to Kalbarri 35 years ago and began collecting flora specimens and sending them to the WA Herbarium to confirm identification. They opened a wildflower centre in Kalbarri called 'Kalfloora'. Their extensive flora knowledge contributed to the success of the centre and they continued their herbarium collections.

When they retired and sold the wildflower centre together with their herbarium collection, the Bellairs began expanding the Kalbarri National Park's herbarium collection as volunteers for the Department.

Their volunteer work also included assisting with the Department's *Western Shield* native animal recovery initiative in Kalbarri National Park through helping with trapping and radio tracking of woylies and chuditch.

Since Mr and Mrs Bellairs began collecting flora, they have collected 1142 specimens in the Kalbarri area. They have collected 13 species listed as Declared Rare Flora and 86 that are listed as Priority or poorly known flora. They estimate there are possibly 1300 to 1400 different plant species in the Kalbarri National Park, as they are still finding plants they have not yet collected.



Don and Barbara Bellairs with the rediscovered plant.

Photo by Alanna Chant



Don + Barbara Bellairs  
with Stachytenon nematophylla

Alanna Chant

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(Discovery of a new  
plant in Kalbarri NP  
2002)