

'Extinct' WA shrub found

By STEVE HOPPER

ANOTHER of the State's presumed extinct plants has been rediscovered.

Tetralochea deltoidea, a small scrambling shrub with nodding dark pink flowers, was first collected by a Miss G. Sewell in 1889.

Miss Sewell found the plant on or near Mt Caroline in the central wheatbelt.

She sent her pressed specimens to Baron von Mueller, the leading Australian botanist of the day, who placed the collections in the Melbourne Herbarium.

There they lay neglected until the 1970s when Joy Thompson of the National Herbarium in Sydney examined them as part of a taxonomic revision of *Tetralochea*.

Ms Thompson used Miss Sewell's specimens as type material to name the new species *T. deltoidea*, which was published in 1976.

The author noted that "in spite of the fragmentary nature of all the specimens this species is quite distinct and does not seem to bear a close relationship to any other."

Two years later, I commenced a series of studies on the conservation status and biology of *Eucalyptus caesia*, the type of which

was also collected from Mt Caroline but by the famous colonial botanist James Drummond.

Over the past 10 years I have spent several periods on Mt Caroline studying the pollination of *E. caesia* by birds.

In July of this year I was searching for orchids at the base of a tree in the middle of my main study patch and noticed a few small flowers on a *Tetralochea* that was scrambling through dense sedges and up the base of the *E. caesia*.

Remembering that Jenni Alford from Woodvale Research Centre was interested in tetralocheas and had mentioned one presumed extinct from the Mt Caroline area, I made a small collection and took several photographs.

After close comparison of my specimens with Joy Thompson's description of *T. deltoidea*, plus examining an excellent drawing of Miss Sewell's material made by WA Herbarium botanist Sue Patrick, there seems little doubt that the species is alive and well.

Early in August, I returned to Mt Caroline

with consultant botanist Stephen Van Leeuwen and technical officer Andrew Brown to search out and map the *Tetralochea*.

We found the species confined to three small soil pockets, each of less than a hectare and containing a total of about 150 plants.

The species is confined to shaded sites beneath *E. caesia* in dense tall sedges close to the edge of massive granite.

Tetralochea deltoidea now needs further survey to establish its distribution and abundance.

There are many other large granite outcrops near Mt Caroline, in an area famous for its rock wallaby populations and the elegant experiments on fox control conducted by Dr Jack Kinneer and his team.

The rediscovery of *T. deltoidea* emphasises the outstanding conservation values of many of our granite outcrops.

Maybe in future I'll look a bit closer at what's on the ground elsewhere beneath the trees that I've studied for a long time!



GEOFF and Mark build an information heritage trail on Stony Hill in Torndirrup National Park.