

CALM volunteers' rare plant re-discovery identified



Jean and Fred Hort are ready, with hats, haversacks and notebooks, to track down more rare plants. Photo by Noel Hoffman.

A RARE Western Australian wildflower, the pink starbush, (*Asterolasia grandiflora*) was found recently, growing in CALM's Mundaring District.

The rare flora was discovered by wildflower enthusiasts Jean and Fred Hort who, as CALM volunteers, play an active role in the department's rare flora program.

Although the Horts located the rare flora several years ago, they were not aware of its identity until recently, when Mrs Hort keyed out the species and identified it as *Asterolasia grandiflora*.

Realising the significance of their find, Fred notified CALM's Wildlife Branch, and arrangements were made with Swan Region conservation officer, Les Robson to confirm its identity.

Les confirmed the plants as

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the rare starbush, counting more than 1200 individual *Asterolasia grandiflora* plants. He estimates that the new population consists of more than 5000 individual plants!

The pink starbush, which is declared as rare flora under the Wildlife Conservation Act, was previously known from six populations in the wild, consisting of an estimated 5800 plants.

The newly discovered population is now the largest one known in the wild and is thus significant for the conservation of the species.

As the common name suggests, the pink starbush is a pale pink-flowered shrub to one metre high.

It is confined to lateritic hills

in the Toodyay-York area and now, thanks to Jean and Fred, it is also known from Mundaring. The species flowers from July to October.

The pink starbush is the second rare species the Horts have discovered in recent times.

They located a number of populations of the very rare orchid, the cinnamon sun orchid (*Thelymitra dedmaniarum*) in the Wandoo Conservation Park in 1995.

Jean and Fred's interest and enthusiasm, and that of other CALM rare flora volunteers is helping CALM to better document the location and distribution of the State's rare wildflowers.

About 10 per cent of rare flora report forms submitted to CALM as part of the rare flora monitoring program are completed by volunteers.

