Spring Collection

S. D. Hopper

The sun orchids *(Thelymitra species)* are a colourful group, with the 'Queen of Sheba' *(T. variegata)* probably being the most attractive. It has an unusual spiral leaf.

Text by Judith Brown

W.A. is one of the richest wildflower areas in the world. Its great wealth lies not only in the large number of species to be found but also in the great diversity of size, shape, colour and form of the individual flowers.

This strange and primitive flora did not appeal to the early explorers,who generally described the landscape as barren and desolate. Even Charles Darwin, who visited the coast near Albany in 1836, commented that he would 'never wish to walk again in so uninviting a country'. That same country seen through different eyes today has become one of our greatest assets, a priceless gift for all to enjoy.

Many of our wildflowers can be truly described as unique. The kangaroo paw, banksia, boronia, triggerplants and orchids are some of the botanical curiosities attracting international interest.

The total number of plant species now recorded in W.A. is nearly 8 000. Approximately half of these can be found in the South-West, in an area bound by the coast and a line between Shark Bay in the north and Israelite Bay in the south. An unusually high proportion of these are endemic to the South-West, that is they occur nowhere else.

The Albany region, in particular the Stirling Range National Park, provides habitat for many of the endemic species, and is well worth a visit during spring. Nearly half the species belong to one of three major south-west families: the Myrtaceae family, with *Eucalyptus*, *Melaleuca*, *Verticordia* and *Darwinia*; the Proteaceae with genera such as *Banksia* and *Grevillia*; and the pea family, Papilionaceae, which includes *Chorizema*, *Hovea* and *Daviesia*.

The beautiful *Banksia* species are among the many species in the Stirling Range Park which are susceptible to the dieback fungus *Phytophthora cinnamomi*. Extra care must be taken by bushwalkers to minimize disturbance and to restrict the transport of soil on boots.

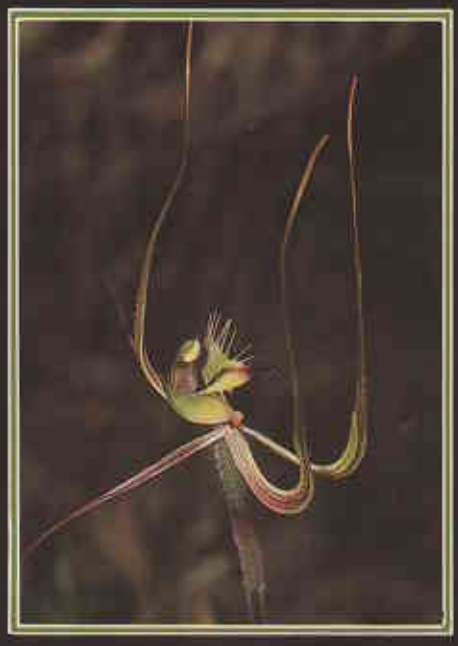
As with soft, furry creatures in the animal kingdom, the orchids are often the drawcard for attention in the plant world. Although small they can provide a real sense of excitement when found in the bush.

The wildflowers found outside the south-west corner of the State also put on spectacular displays. The extensive 'fields' of everlastings in the semi-arid areas are a major tourist attraction in July to October, especially after good falls of rain.

The wattles, *Acacia spp.*, are a dominant component of the flora of the North-West among the spinifex grasslands; and the very name *Eremophila* means desert-loving.

The flora of the Kimberley region is different again, being influenced by the tropical climate. Numerous river systems, gorges and mesas feature in the rugged landscape, each with their associated floral communities.

The glossy pink enamel orchid (Elythranthera emarginata) can be found in flower throughout the South-West from September through to November.



The dragon orchid *(Caladenia barbarossa)* (top left), the fringed mantis orchid *(C. dilatata)* (bottom left) and the pink fairy orchid *(C. latifolia)* demonstrate the variety of forms and colour within the largest orchid genus in the South-West.

One of the many orchid flowers which resemble an animal's face is the common donkey orchid *(Diuris longifolia)* (right). There are six named species of *Diuris* restricted to the south coast, as well as several unnamed ones.

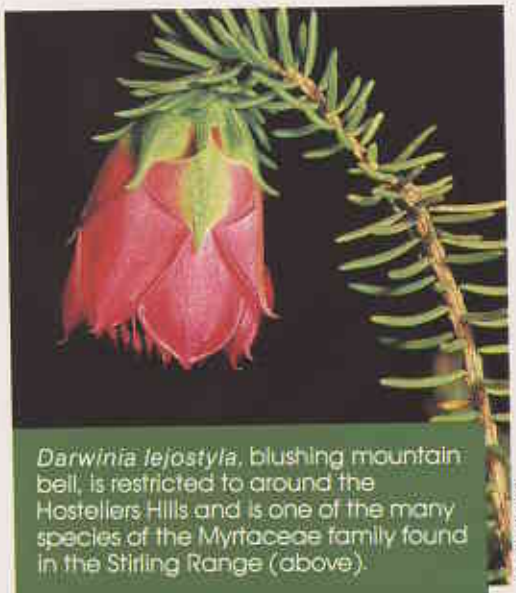
A. Brown

Jiri Lochman

There are many other orchids which are duller in colour, but have unusual forms and features. The flower of the slipper orchid *Cryptostylis ovata)* (left) and the king-in-his-carriage orchid *(Drakea glyptodon)* (below) mimics a female wasp so as to attract a pollinator and ensure cross-pollination.

Jiri Lochman

Jiri Lochman A. Rose



Darwinia leiostyla, blushing mountain bell, is restricted to around the Hosteliers Hills and is one of the many species of the Myrtaceae family found in the Stirling Range (above).

Jiri Lochman

The hooded lily *(Johnsonia Lupulina)* is an unusual member of the Liliaceae family with its small flowers hidden among the papery bracts.

T. Tepper

Boronia pulchella means beautiful boronia. It has one of the largest flowers in the group and is found on the top of Bluff Knoll (below).

T. Tepper

M. A. Burgman

Jiri Lochman

One of the spectacular red flowering *Grevilleas* found in the South-West is *Grevillea huegellii* (above). It can be seen flowering in early spring in wandoo and salmon gum woodlands.

The mottlecah *(Eucalyptus macrocarpa)* (above left) comes from the Wheatbelt, and features in many Perth gardens.

This short robust plant *(Stylidium crossocephalum)* from the sandplains north of Perth has flowers typical of the triggerplant group (below).

S. D. Hopper

Although not strictly a spring wildflower, this waterlily *(Nymphaea gigantea)* is a fine representative of Kimberley flora.

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COVER PHOTO:
Stark silhouettes evoke the spirit of our remote regions. This photograph was taken near Quairading by Hans Versluis.

EDITORIAL

Public participation in land management sounds like a great idea: the community has a chance to study and comment upon the government's proposals. The scientists and managers can keep their fingers on the pulse of public demand. But sometimes good ideas are hard to put into practice.

Last April the Department of Conservation and Land Management released draft management plans for the south-west forest regions, and a draft timber strategy for W.A. The release of the plans was accompanied by a series of workshops and public meetings, and extensive media releases. Four hundred and thirty-five letters offering briefings and speakers were sent out. Ninety groups responded. Public comment on any aspect of the plans and the strategy was invited.

4070 responses were received. This included 3505 proformas (from 30 organisations) and 565 substantial submissions, some up to 200 pages in length. Many submissions endorsed the plans in their entirety; some rejected them out of hand; others suggested hundreds of minor changes.

How can so many, and such varied, views possibly be integrated simply and sensibly into a final plan? What weighting should be given to the views of different groups or individuals? Who decides what is 'right' when pure value judgements are to be made and values are in conflict? How should one resolve an issue when the views of a large section of the public are quite different from those of a small group of scientists working closely on the problem? These questions represent the sharp end of public participation. It's a relatively new game for W.A.'s land managers, and one in which the rules are still unwritten and ill-defined.

What is certain is that the Department's policy and planning staff have a big job ahead of them, and a job which must be done to the highest possible professional standard. It is important that the final plans for our south-west forests reflect the tremendous thought, effort and interest shown by the community; and it is essential that there are efficient mechanisms for public involvement in conservation and land management, because these processes will be the norm, not the exception in years ahead.

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