

Croninia



Western Australia has a new monotypic genus—*Croninia*. This new genus was described by Dr Jocelyn Powell from the National Herbarium of New South Wales using collections provided by the Department of Conservation and Land Management's (CALM) Western Australian Herbarium and from other sources.

A monotypic genus contains only one species, and in this case it is the beard-heath *Croninia kingiana*. Previously known as *Styphelia kingiana* or *Leucopogon kingianus*, recent studies have shown that *C. kingiana* is, in fact, a distinct genus.

Dr Powell confirmed the distinction while carrying out revisionary taxonomic study of the genus *Leucopogon*, and her findings were published in the 1993 volume of CALM's taxonomic journal *Nuytsia*.

The name *Croninia* honours Michael

and Mary Cronin who farmed near Katanning in the 1880s. This father and daughter team collected specimens from many areas of southern Western Australia for the famous Victorian botanist Ferdinand von Mueller. In 1893, Mueller published a species which he called *Styphelia kingiana*, based on a collection made by the Cronins.

The name *kingiana* honours Henry John King (c. 1815–88), who was prominent in Melbourne's musical circles and organist of St James Cathedral, and it seems likely that Mueller knew him.

Croninia belongs to the family Epacridaceae (southern heaths) and seems most closely related to the genus *Conostephium*, commonly known as pearl flowers. Other well-known relatives include the tassel flower (*Leucopogon verticillatus*) and common pinheath (*Styphelia tenuiflora*).

Characteristic features of the genus

A NEW PLANT GENUS

Recent studies have shown that at least one plant in the genus *Leucopogon* shouldn't be there. It is, in fact, one of a kind. So what is the story behind this unique and endemic Western Australian? **by Suzanne Curry**

The unusual and attractive yellowish green flowers of *Croninia kingiana* congregate towards the branch ends.

Croninia kingiana growing among common woollybush (*Adenanthos cygnorum*) scrub north of Badgingarra.

Photos — Alex George

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include strongly parallel-veined leaves, which form a spiral around the stem. The conspicuous flowers occur singly along the stem between a pair of fleshy, triangular bracts. The flower petals form a cylinder with fleshy, triangular, bearded lobes and the anthers have two short lobes. The fruit is a small drupe (like the peach or cherry) but dry.

C. kingiana grows as an erect compact shrub to one metre tall, with bluish green leaves that are finely tipped and have between five and nine strong parallel veins. The conspicuous, attractive flowers are congregated towards the branch ends and extend past the leaves. These flowers exude a strong and sweet honey smell. Their sepals and corolla tube are an unusual pale yellowish green and the corolla lobes are white. These lobes and the inside of the flowers are bearded by dense hairs. This latter character, in particular, groups it with

the genus *Leucopogon*, commonly known as beard-heaths.

C. kingiana is endemic to Western Australia. It has a scattered and fairly widespread distribution, commonly between Jurien, Perth, Narrogin and Southern Cross. It flowers in late winter and early spring, and can be found in deep sand within open heath or low open woodlands.

The species has great horticultural potential. Being in the Epacridaceae family, it is related to the exotic heathers (*Erica* spp.), which are well known to gardeners and horticulturists. The introduction of *Croninia kingiana* to the garden would help conserve this attractive species, particularly as some of its Perth suburban habitats are disappearing with development. Fortunately, it is protected in some areas entrusted to CALM, including the Badgingarra National Park.

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VOLUME TWELVE NUMBER 1, SPRING 1996



Rainbow lorikeets. Are they pests? Will they displace our native birds? Do we need to control their numbers, and if so, how? Find out more on page 17.



A subspecies of granny bonnets (Isotropis cuneifolia subsp. glabra) found in a threatened community on the Swan Coastal Plain. See story on page 35.



'The Magic of Magenta' co-author Mal Graham clearing an Aboriginal soak in Lake Magenta Nature Reserve. See our story on page 41.



A rat by any other name...? In 'Dinkum Aussie Rats' Andrew Burbidge discusses the use of common and Aboriginal names for native rodents.



In 'Saving the Giants', read how a new Tree Top Walk in WA's south-west is set to become one of Australia's nature-based tourism icons.

FEATURES

SAVING THE GIANTS CLIFF WINFIELD	10
RAINBOW LORIKEETS: INVADERS IN THE SUBURBS DAVID LAMONT & ALLAN BURBIDGE	17
DINKUM AUSSIE RATS ANDREW BURBIDGE	22
SLUGS OF THE SEA KEVIN CRANE	28
THREATENED PLANT COMMUNITIES ON THE SWAN COASTAL PLAIN VAL ENGLISH, GREG KEIGHERY & JOHN BLYTH	35
THE MAGIC OF MAGENTA MURRAY CARTER, MAL GRAHAM & CHRIS JOHNSON	41
CRONINA: A NEW GENUS SUZANNE CURRY	48
A BLAST FROM THE PAST ALEX BEVAN	50

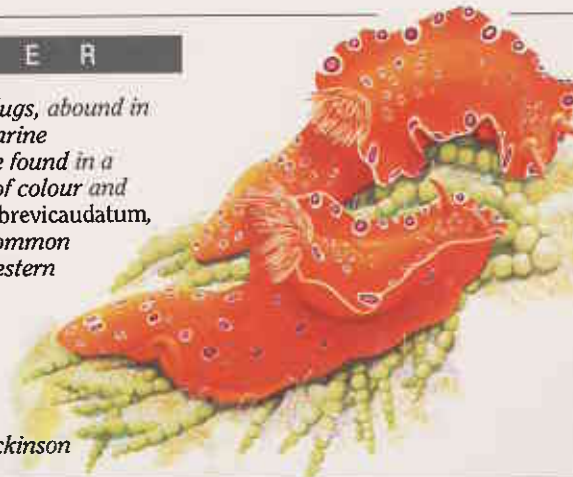
REGULARS

IN PERSPECTIVE	4
BUSH TELEGRAPH	6
ENDANGERED: DUNSBOROUGH SPIDER ORCHID	47
URBAN ANTICS	54

COVER

Nudibranchs, or sea-slugs, abound in Western Australia's marine environment. They are found in a tremendous diversity of colour and form, the Ceratosoma brevicaudatum, illustrated here, is a common inhabitant of south-western waters. See page 28 to learn more about the 'Slugs of the Sea'.

Illustration by Ian Dickinson



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