



ENDANGERED



CARRICK'S MINTBUSH

Currently Western Australia has more than 300 plants listed as threatened, 38 of which have been ranked as critically endangered. During surveys initiated by CALM's Western Australian Threatened Species Unit (WATSCU), three of these species have been found to be more common than previously thought.

One of them is a species that was thought to be extremely rare, but, through the willingness of Esperance wildflower enthusiasts to share their local knowledge with CALM, has been found to be locally abundant. That species is Carrick's mintbush (*Prostanthera carrickiana*), declared as Rare Flora in 1987, and ranked as Critically Endangered in 1995.

Named in honour of the late John Carrick, the species was first collected by Mark Burgman in 1983, from a granite outcrop north-east of Esperance. This was the only known population until found on a second nearby outcrop by local wildflower enthusiast Barbara Archer, in 1990. Numerous surveys between then and 1996 failed to relocate the original population and no other populations were found.

Carrick's mintbush is an upright

shrub to two metres high with densely hairy branches. Its leaves are smooth and narrowly oval in shape. The flowers, which appear in April and continue well into November, are most attractive, similar to honeysuckle flowers in their shape, two to three centimetres long and pinkish-red. In its natural habitat, the species grows in shallow pockets of brown-red sandy loam over granite in heath or open shrubland. Associated native plants include species of *Hakea*, *Melaleuca*, *Calothamnus* and *Pelargonium*, pincushion plants and sheoaks.

In May 1996, a group from WATSCU met up with staff from CALM's Esperance District and with volunteers Gillian Stack, Christine Turley and Barbara Archer. Several days were then spent searching granite outcrops to the north-east of Esperance.

The population originally discovered by Mark Burgman was relocated and was found to contain more than 400 plants, many in full flower. Barbara

Archer then took the group to where she had seen Carrick's mintbush in 1990, and a large population of more than 1000 plants was found. At this time Mrs Archer mentioned that she and her husband had found a new population on a large granite outcrop south-west of Balladonia. A survey of the area found 5000 or more plants growing in a similar habitat to the first two populations, and it was often dominant in the understorey.

Carrick's mintbush is no longer regarded as critically endangered. Approximately 400 seeds are held by CALM's Threatened Flora Seed Centre to preserve the genetic stock of the species, and three populations containing more than 6 400 plants are now known over a 50-kilometre range. One of these populations is on a reserve and the other two on vacant Crown land in remote areas that are under no immediate threat.

There are numerous granite outcrops in the Esperance-Balladonia area, and it is quite likely that Carrick's mintbush grows on some of them. If you think you have found this species, please contact your nearest CALM office.

By Andrew Brown

LANDSCOPE

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Noisy scrub-birds are rare in museum collections. This one, from a Dutch Museum, was probably collected by John Gilbert. See page 36.



Mount Bakewell looms over the old town of York, but it is more than just a prominent landmark. Find out why on page 42.



This year, The Hills Forest celebrates its fifth birthday. Find out what's been happening there in our story on page 10.



The Kimberley region of Western Australia has some weird and wonderful landforms. Read all about them on page 16.



The northern quoll is just one of WA's marsupials that have been part of a recent conservation status review. See page 22.

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COVER

Get down on the ground, scramble through the leaf litter and compost in your garden, and discover the fascinating world of insects. 'Insects in the Garden', on page 28, shows how these seemingly insignificant creatures help keep the ecosystem running smoothly and how they are a vital part of nature's life-cycle.

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