

DISCOVERY OF A NEW POPULATION OF THE YORNANING WATTLE

Early in 1997, staff from CALM's Threatened Flora Seed Centre (TFSC) and the WA Threatened Species and Communities Unit (WATSCU) began a project looking at the possible causes of low reproductive output in the Yornaning wattle (*Acacia insolita* subsp. *recurva*). This plant is a particularly attractive species of *Acacia*, growing to about one metre high, with mature plants maintaining fine grey-green feather-like foliage and large, globe-shaped clusters of yellow flowers that appear in July and August.

CALM volunteers and active members of the Central South Naturalists' Club, accompanied WATSCU consultant biologist Gillian Stack to conduct a thorough survey of the plant's only known site at East Yornaning, north-east of Narrogin, extending the recorded population from about 50 to nearly 800 plants. Local farmers Gwen and Malcolm Gath were particularly interested in the project and agreed to help in monitoring the population, as their nearby farm featured breakaways (gullies formed by wind or erosion) similar to those where the plant is known to occur in East Yornaning.

By chance, on the afternoon following the survey, Malcolm Gath and his son were chasing foxes through their farm, when Malcolm came across a small population of what he immediately recognised as the rare wattle. He was delighted with the find, and immediately began fencing individual plants to protect them from grazing by kangaroos. The Gaths had



Above: Left to right, WATSCU staff Gillian Stack and Leonie Monks with CALM volunteer Gwen Gath and granddaughter Suna Halil.

Left: The Yornaning wattle.

Photos - Kate Brown

bought this part of their farm (110 hectares of uncleared wandoo woodland) from the Lands Department about 30 years ago to save it from becoming a pig farm. Under the laws of the day, they had to clear a small area, but the rest has been fenced and remains largely intact.

The Yornaning wattle was first collected from the original site at East Yornaning by CALM botanist Ken Atkins in 1984. Extensive surveys in the years following failed to find further populations and, in 1996, the species was gazetted as 'rare'. Due to its small population size,

sparse distribution, large-scale clearance of habitat and grazing pressures from rabbits and kangaroos, the Yornaning wattle was recently ranked by CALM'S Threatened Species Scientific Committee as 'critically endangered'.

TFSC staff have been visiting the East Yornaning site since 1995 as a part of their ongoing work involving collection, long-term storage and monitoring of seed from WA's rare and threatened flora (see 'Banking for the Future', *LANDSCOPE*, Winter 1996). However, collection of adequate seed of this subspecies for the maintenance of genetic

diversity in storage has proven to be difficult. Over the past three years, the plants have set relatively little fruit, and kangaroos and rabbits grazing the growing shoots have compounded the problem. In 1996, only 52 seeds were collected from the population.

It is thanks to the Gaths that the second population of the Yornaning wattle has survived. They, and many other farmers, play an important role in the management and maintenance of remnant vegetation, and make a highly valuable contribution to nature conservation in our heavily cleared agricultural areas.

LANDSCOPE

VOLUME THIRTEEN NUMBER 3, AUTUMN 1998



CALM's fight against feral cats gathers ground on Peron Peninsula with the development and testing of a cat bait. See 'Approaching Eden' on page 28.



Roadside vegetation often provides vital links between remnant habitats. See our story on page 23.



What attracted early pioneers to this barren corner of Western Australia? Find out in 'Eucla Pioneers' on page 35.



A new CALM book gives bushwalkers a host of short and longer walks in Western Australia's south-west. See page 10.



Fire is an important part of Western Australia's environment. Scientists continue to discover just how important. See page 17.

FEATURES

BUSHWALKS IN THE SOUTH-WEST
CAROLYN THOMSON-DANS 10

A FIRE FOR ALL REASONS
NEIL BURROWS 17

ROADSIDES ... THE VITAL LINK
DAVID LAMONT 23

APPROACHING EDEN
DAVID ALGAR AND RAY SMITH 28

EUCLA PIONEERS
ALISON MUIR, JIM MUIR AND JOHN THOMSON 35

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?
CLEMENCY FISHER 40

JEWELS OF THE WEST
MATTHEW WILLIAMS, ANDREW WILLIAMS AND
TREVOR LUNDSTROM 49

REGULARS

BUSH TELEGRAPH 4

ENDANGERED
WESTERN PRICKLY HONEYSUCKLE 48

URBAN ANTICS
GRUBBY SPITFIRES 54

COVER

The splendid fairy wren was one of many birds collected by John Gilbert, whose collections of specimens have been fragmented over the past 100 years or so. Now, they are being tracked down in museums around the world, and a more complete picture of their original distributions is emerging from Gilbert's original notes and labels. See story on page 40.

Illustration by Philippa Nikulinsky



Executive Editor: Ron Kawalilak
Managing Editor: Ray Bailey
Editor: David Gough
Story Editors: Verna Costello, David Gough, Louise Johnson, Carolyn Thomson-Dans, Mitzi Vance, Penny Walsh
Scientific/technical advice: Andrew Burbidge, Ian Abbott, Paul Jones and staff of CALM's Science and Information Division
Design and production: Maria Duthie, Sue Marais
Illustration: Gooitzen van der Meer, Ian Dickinson
Marketing: Estelle de San Miguel ☎ (08) 9334 0296 Fax: (08) 9334 0498
Subscription enquiries: ☎ (08) 9334 0481 or (08) 9334 0437
 Colour Separation by Colourbox Digital
 Printed in Western Australia by Lamb Print
 © ISSN 0815-4465 All material copyright. No part of the contents of the publication may be reproduced without consent of the publishers
 Visit LANDSCOPE online on our award-winning internet site NatureBase at <http://www.calm.wa.gov.au/>



Published by Dr S Shea, Executive Director
Department of Conservation and Land Management,
50 Hayman Road, Como, Western Australia