



ENDANGERED!



WESTERN PRICKLY HONEYSUCKLE

Endemic to Australia, *Lambertia* is a small genus of ten species, nine of which occur in the south-west of Western Australia. Three of these are declared as 'rare flora' and one, *L. echinata*, contains two subspecies that are ranked as 'critically endangered'. The prickly honeysuckle (*L. echinata* subsp. *echinata*) was covered in the Summer 1992-93 issue of *LANDSCOPE*. Here, we cover the second subspecies, the western prickly honeysuckle (*L. echinata* subsp. *occidentalis*).

The name *echinata* is derived from the Latin *echinus* (hedgehog) and refers to the prickly leaves of the species, while the name *occidentalis* is Latin for 'western', and refers to the western occurrence of this subspecies.

The western prickly honeysuckle is a shrub that grows to three metres in height. It is much branched at the base with long erect floral branches.

There are two types of leaves—vegetative leaves, which are smooth edged and narrow lance-shaped with a pointed apex, and floral leaves, which are smaller and may be smooth edged or lobed with three to five points. The flowers, which appear from late October to December, are

yellow, and crowded at the ends of the branches. The western prickly honeysuckle differs from the prickly honeysuckle in that the flowers are yellow rather than pink-red, and are borne on long floral branches instead of short branchlets within the body of the plant. It differs from the much more common *L. echinata* subsp. *citrina* in having entire vegetative leaves and floral leaves that are mostly three-pointed or entire.

The western prickly honeysuckle appears to be confined to the Whicher Range area, south of Busselton, where it is currently known from a single population. It is found on shallow soils over sheet ironstone. These soils support rich scrub heath and sedges with scattered banksias and marri.

Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) scientist Greg Keighery undertook surveys for this subspecies in 1990 and, along with colleagues Neil Gibson, Bronwyn Keighery, Allan Burbidge and Mike Lyons, conducted a botanical survey of the southern Swan Coastal Plain in 1994.

By Andrew Brown

Neither of these surveys located further populations of this rare subspecies.

The rarity of the subspecies is probably due to the amount of clearing of its habitat that has occurred for agriculture in the Whicher Range area.

Also, like most other members of the genus, it is particularly susceptible to dieback, a disease caused by *Phytophthora cinnamomi* and which is present in the immediate area.

Due to the low number of plants (just 11 are known), restricted distribution, highly specialised habitat and susceptibility to *Phytophthora* spp., western prickly honeysuckle was declared as 'rare flora' in October 1996 and ranked as 'critically endangered' in September 1997. Other potential threats include mineral exploration, accidental destruction from track use, inappropriate fire regimes and insect damage.

An Interim Recovery Plan is in draft stage. CALM, through the direction of the Central Forest Threatened Flora Recovery Team, is currently addressing those threats most endangering the subspecies.

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.

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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



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 Colour Separation by Colourbox Digital
 Printed in Western Australia by Lamb Print
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 Visit LANDSCOPE online on our award-winning internet site NatureBase at <http://www.calm.wa.gov.au/>

 Published by Dr S Shea, Executive Director
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 50 Hayman Road, Como, Western Australia