



ENDANGERED!



ELEGANT SPIDER ORCHID

Caladenia elegans ms, commonly known as elegant spider orchid, is one of Western Australia's rarest and most attractive orchids. Standing up to 30 centimetres high, it has a single hairy leaf to 12 centimetres long by five millimetres wide and has up to three large lemon-yellow flowers, each with a red-striped labellum (the lip or tongue of the flower). Plants grow in clumps of up to seven or more. Flowers appear between late July and late August.

The orchid closely resembles common white spider orchid, (*Caladenia vulgata*), with which it is often confused, but differs in having yellow rather than cream or white flowers, glossy calli and a preference for heavy clay-loam soils in winter-wet areas. *Caladenia vulgata* grows in well-drained soils further upslope. Hybrids occur in the narrow habitat boundary between populations of the two species.

Elegant spider orchid is found with another Critically Endangered orchid, Northampton midget greenhood (*Pterostylis* sp. Northampton). This orchid is even rarer than the elegant spider orchid and is known from

just four very small populations. For information on this species see page 149 of *Western Australia's Threatened Flora*.

Habitat consists of broom bush (*Melaleuca uncinata*), djarnokmurd (*Hakea recurva*) and hophbush (*Dodonaea* sp.) over low heath consisting of pine grevillea (*Grevillea pinaster*) and rock thryptomene (*Thryptomene saxicola*). The elegant spider orchid was first collected in 1982 and since then just a few other populations have been found near Northampton. These are mainly confined to road reserves in areas where much of the natural bushland has been cleared for agriculture.

Elegant spider orchid was declared as Rare Flora in 1991 and ranked as Critically Endangered in 1995. An Interim Recovery Plan that outlines a number of essential recovery actions is being prepared by the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) and is being progressively

implemented. The Geraldton District Threatened Flora Recovery Team, which consists of representatives from CALM, community groups, pastoralists, local shires, and various government organisations, is overseeing the implementation of these actions. Actions include control of weeds, redirecting water flow, fencing populations to protect them from grazing, monitoring of feral pig activity, habitat rehabilitation, conducting further surveys, collection and storage of seed and researching the biology and ecology of elegant spider orchid.

Posters have been produced for both elegant spider orchid and Northampton midget greenhood. These are designed to aid CALM staff, shire employees and community members in identifying the species and to encourage them to look for further populations. The posters contain descriptive information, list threats and recovery actions and illustrate each species and their habitat. You can view them on CALM's NatureBase at http://www.calm.wa.gov.au/plants_animals/critical_flora.html.

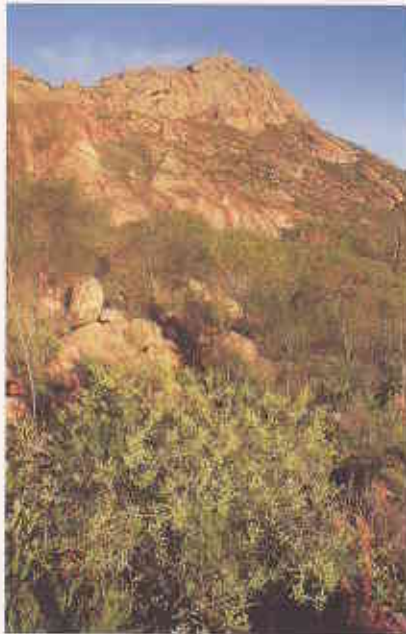
By Andrew Brown
and Val English



Winner of the 1998 Alex Harris Medal for excellence in science and environment reporting.

LANDSCOPE

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Peak Charles and Peak Eleanora, protected within Peak Charles National Park, form granite islands in a sea of bush. See page 10.



The Swan River is a recreation area for humans and a home for migratory birds. See page 16.



A partnership between State and Commonwealth governments, and a group of pastoralists is helping to fill the gaps in the conservation estate. See page 43.



Butterflies have a short life span, but they bring pleasure to many people who visit Rottnest Island. See page 23.



Many marine creatures have evolved ingenious survival methods. See page 49.

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C O V E R

Well-known Australian artist Ken Done captures the colour and turbulence of the horizontal waterfalls on the Kimberley's Wandjina Coast.

Painting by Ken Done
Racing Tide, Kimberley Coast, May 1999
(51 x 36 cm) oil crayon and gouache
on paper.



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