



ENDANGERED!



HEATH COMMUNITY ON NOONDINE CHERT HILLS

The narrow tract of Noondine chert hills stretches from Carnamah to Moora, yet the large-flowered regelia (*Regelia megacephala*) and the extraordinary kunzea (*Kunzea praestans*) are only found on the hills between Watheroo and Moora. Why? Local farmers have put forward the most plausible explanation—it is only between Watheroo and Moora that the chert is exposed and these plants have specially adapted to live there.

The Department of Conservation and Land Management's (CALM's) WA Threatened Species and Communities Unit (WATSCU), with help from the Natural Heritage Trust, set about gathering information on the plant assemblages in these chert hills during a project to identify and conserve threatened ecological communities in the Wheatbelt.

What they found was that the slopes and summits of the chert hills support a heath community containing parrotbush (*Dryandra sessilis*), rough honeymyrtle (*Melaleuca scabra*), Leschenault's starflower (*Calytrix leschenaultii*) and native grasses. It also supports five

other species, listed as Declared Rare or Priority Flora that are entirely or largely confined to these chert hills. These include quartz-loving synaphea (*Synaphea quartzitica*) and Watheroo wattle (*Acacia aristulata*).

So what makes this community so interesting? Depending on the soil and the profile of the hill, the heath community is dominated by one or two particular species. On the hill summits where the chert is exposed, the heath community is dominated by large-flowered regelia. Tamma dominates the tops of the hills where the chert is not exposed, whilst extraordinary kunzea dominates the heath community on the partially exposed slopes. Since this heath community is restricted to the chert hills between Moora and Watheroo, it was classified as an 'Endangered' threatened ecological community.

Less than five per cent of the heath community is in a conservation reserve—Watheroo National Park.

by Sheila Hamilton-Brown

Photo by Val English

Inset Photo by G. Stack

There is no exposed chert on the hills in the national park and, subsequently, it only contains the tamma-dominated heath. The other 95 per cent of the heath community is found on private land, of which only 12 per cent is fenced. 'Cairn Hill'—owned by Westrail—is the best example of all the known sites, as it contains the tamma, regelia and kunzea heaths, and the five rare and priority flora. It is also the least disturbed site. CALM is currently negotiating to acquire this land. The biggest threat to the heath community is mining. Chert mining has removed 10 per cent of the known community and there are prospecting leases on at least another 15 per cent.

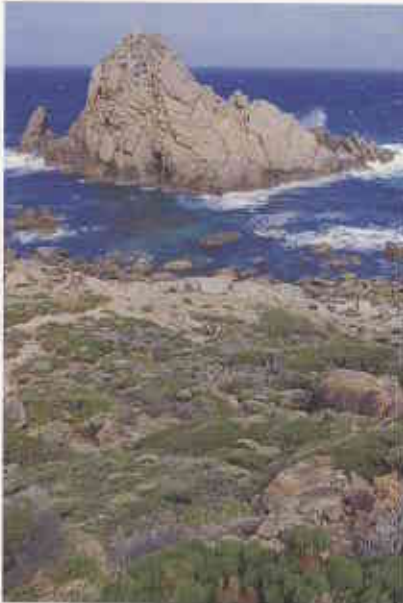
WATSCU has drafted an Interim Recovery Plan for the heath community, with input from landholders. The overseeing of recovery actions by the Moora District Threatened Flora Recovery Team, and continued close cooperation with the landholders and managers, are high priorities for the conservation of this restricted community.



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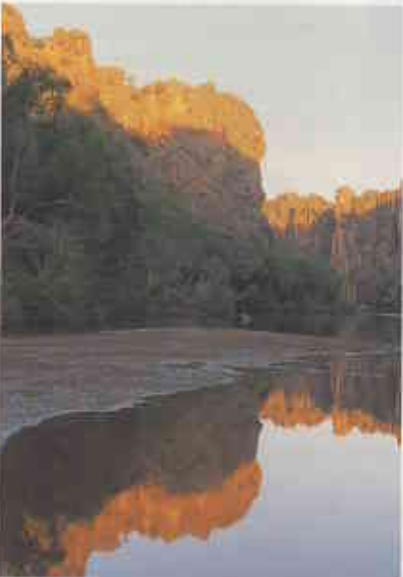
Sugarloaf Rock is just one of the many features that make Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park the most visited park in WA. (See page 10.)



Premier Park: John Forrest National Park is Western Australia's oldest park, celebrating its centenary year. (See page 22.)



Pinnacle of Parks: These unusual formations make Nambung National Park well known the world over. (See page 36.)



Windjana Gorge National Park holds important clues to the evolution of fish. See 'Old Fossils' on page 28.



William Bay National Park displays a miniature version of karri forest flora. (See page 42.)

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COVER

With 67 national parks spread across the State, park rangers are often the first contact that visitors have with the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM). Apart from providing visitors with information and guidance, they perform a vital role in the day-to-day management of their local environment.



Cover illustration by Gooitzen van der Meer, Western Australian artist and a graphic designer with CALM.

Executive Editor: Ron Kawalilak

Editors: David Gough and Carolyn Thomson-Dans

Story Editors: Caris Bailey, Mandy Clews and Verna Costello

Scientific/technical advice: Andrew Burbidge, Keith Morris, Paul Jones and staff of CALM Science Division

Design and production: Tiffany Abern, Maria Duthie, Gooitzen van der Meer

Illustration: Ian Dickinson, John Long, Gooitzen van der Meer

Marketing: Estelle de San Miguel ☎ (08) 9334 0296 Fax: (08) 9334 0498

Subscription enquiries: ☎ (08) 9334 0481 or (08) 9334 0437

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