

## HELPING HAND FOR THREATENED PLANT

The wing-fruited lasiopetalum (*Lasiopetalum pterocarpum* ms) is a critically endangered shrub with oak-like leaves.

It is known from only one population at Serpentine National Park, and this consists of three sub-populations, each separated by a few hundred metres. Major threats to the species are weeds, trampling by recreational users of the park and too-frequent bush fires.

The species suffers from competition from blackberry and watsonia plants. Fortunately, weed pulling and treatment with herbicides were carried out just before a wildfire swept through part of the population in December 1999. These weed-control activities were conducted with the help of environmental management students from Joondalup TAFE and their supervisor Bill Evans, Threatened Flora Seed Centre Manager Anne Cochrane, WA Threatened Species and Communities Unit Ecologist Val English, the Unit's Project Officer Robyn Phillimore, and Forest Ranger Alan Wright—these last four from the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM).

Using a 'frog-friendly' herbicide, purchased partly with funds provided by the Natural Heritage Trust, the students spent a day applying the herbicide, under careful supervision, to watsonia plants encroaching on the lasiopetalum plants. Black plastic sheeting was used to stifle and kill off several large blackberry bushes.

Under the supervision of Anne Cochrane, pairs of



students also collected seed from species that are suitable for rehabilitating areas around the known population. These included rib wattle (*Acacia nervosa*), variable-leaved grevillea (*Grevillea diversifolia*) and cut leaf dryandra (*Dryandra praemorsa*). The seed has been propagated, also partly using Natural Heritage Trust funds, and plants will be placed in appropriate areas, especially where dense shrubs may help prevent trampling of wing-fruited lasiopetalum.

The students also searched other likely areas for wing-fruited lasiopetalum—unfortunately without success. However, a later search conducted by Val English and CALM Project Officer Rebecca Evans, revealed 11 plants in

very dense vegetation within a few hundred metres of the original plants.

By mid-December, the watsonia and blackberry plants were dying back and the wing-fruited lasiopetalum plants were in heavy seed. Fortunately, more than 2,000 seeds were collected just before a very hot fire (believed to have been deliberately lit by vandals) turned many of the plants and their habitat to ash. As local CALM firefighters knew of the locations of the sub-populations of the lasiopetalum, they were able to divert the fire, and prevent 11 plants from being destroyed.

The fire has created an excellent opportunity to bring the remaining

*A population of the critically endangered wing-fruited lasiopetalum has benefited from extensive weed control and seed collection.*

*Photo – Andrew Brown/CALM*

blackberry and watsonia plants under control. Weed control and the monitoring of wing-fruited lasiopetalum seedlings that have germinated as a result of the fire will be given very high priority in the next few years.

Wing-fruited lasiopetalum is distinguished by its winged fruit, which has six to 12 elongated wings (usually five large and several smaller wings).

An interim recovery plan is being prepared for this species.

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

# LANDSCOPE

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Botanists rediscover a presumed extinct grass perched on the mountain tops of the Stirling Range National Park. See page 43.



How can we preserve the Leeuwin-Naturaliste caves while catering for increasing visitation? See page 16.



Salinity Strategy surveys are revealing that salinity threatens more than 850 Wheatbelt plant species. How can managers intervene? See page 36.



Discover Perth's eight regional parks and their special features and attractions on page 28.



Learn about the spineless wonders of the marine world and their clever disguises on page 42.

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## COVER

More than 160 different bird species use Cape Arid National Park, which lies on the South Coast about 120 kilometres east of Esperance. The red-eared firetail is one of them. This exotic-looking finch is confined to south-western Australia. It is found in areas of dense heath and undergrowth in thick forest, never too far inland. Cape Arid National Park is the eastern limit of its distribution.



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