

## BEARD HEATH COMES OUT OF HIDING

A threatened Western Australian wildflower, the thick-margined beard heath (*Leucopogon marginatus*), which had not been seen in the wild for 15 years, has been rediscovered.

The plant was found in roadside remnant vegetation during a survey of one of its known collection sites. This site had been surveyed on many previous occasions without success. Coincidentally, several thick-margined beard heath populations were also discovered in a nearby nature reserve by two people carrying out surveys independently of each other.

Thick-margined beard heath has been collected on only three previous occasions. The original type specimen was collected in 1903 by W. V. Fitzgerald, from the Arrino Sandplains, and was not collected again until 1978. Only 100 plants were known from the wild, and the plant was not seen after the mid-1980s.

During the recent survey, new populations of two other threatened species, small-flowered conostylis (*Conostylis micrantha*) and Irwin's conostylis (*Conostylis dielsii* subsp. *teres*) were also discovered on the nature reserve. These finds have improved the status of these species in the wild, and show the importance of nature reserves in terms of the conservation of flora biodiversity.

Western Australia's Midwest region is renowned for its plant diversity, with a significant number of species endemic to the area. The demands of agriculture and other supporting land uses across the Midwest

have resulted in a significant decrease in the distribution of many species. A considerable number are now threatened with extinction.

The 'Protection and Recovery Actions for Threatened Flora in Geraldton District' project, partly funded through the Natural Heritage Trust's Bushcare Program, focuses on improving the chances of survival for threatened plants through appropriate management and the development of community involvement in plant conservation. Such interest and community involvement continues to grow, with many positive outcomes already achieved.



*CALM staff members Alanna Chant and Melinda Bolt examine the recently discovered thick-margined beard heath.*

*Photos – Greg Kitson/CALM*



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

# LANDSCOPE



VOLUME SIXTEEN, NUMBER 2, SUMMER 2000-2001



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.



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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.



Cover illustration by Philippa Nikulinsky

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 Colour Separation by Colourbox Digital  
 Printed in Western Australia by Lamb Print  
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Published by Department of Conservation and Land Management, Dick Perry Avenue, Kensington, Western Australia