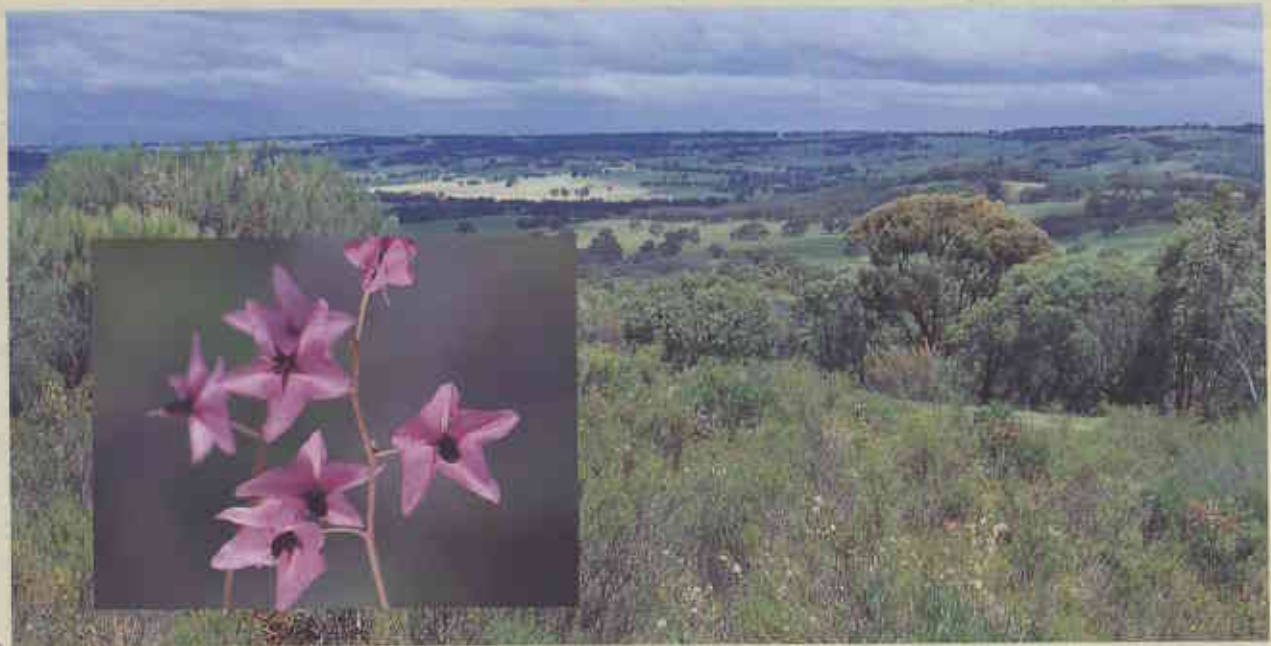




ENDANGERED!



GREEN HILL THOMASIA

Cecil Andrews, an early twentieth century botanist, is believed to have collected the first specimen of Green Hill thomasia. This record is listed only as 'within Western Australia', and was originally identified as *Thomasia stelligera*. Botanists later discovered that the collection was a new species—currently known as *Thomasia* sp. Green Hill.

Nearly 70 years later, in 1972, botanist Susan Paust located a population of Green Hill thomasia several kilometres south of New Norcia. However, this population has not been relocated and it is possible the area has now been cleared.

Another 23 years passed before the species was seen again. In 1995, consultant botanist Diana Papenfus, who was working for the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM), discovered two small subpopulations about 1.5 kilometres apart in remnant bushland owned by the Benedictine Community at New Norcia.

The monks are keen to conserve the rare thomasia, and recent population counts are a tribute to their management of the site. Plant numbers have increased from 66 plants in 1998 to about 100 in 1999. This clearly shows the importance of conservation of private bushland. It is also possible that the species may occur in other areas of uncleared bushland near New Norcia. A small poster has been produced describing and including photos of the species, and it is hoped it will result in the discovery of other populations.

Flowering in September and October, Green Hill thomasia is a low multi-stemmed shrub growing up to 40 centimetres high. The leaves are flat and narrow, 10 to 13 millimetres

long and five millimetres wide. Flowers are usually in groups of three. The seven-millimetre-long ribbed outer whorl of the flowers is mauve with a reddish-purple base, and is divided for less than half its length into five obtuse arching lobes. The rounded petals and anthers are dark purplish-black. The plant inhabits brown clayey sand over laterite in open wandoo woodland.

Due to its extreme rarity, Green Hill thomasia is listed as 'critically endangered' and CALM has developed an Interim Recovery Plan for the species. The plan lists recovery actions, including maintenance of boundary fences and firebreaks, weed control, further surveys and regular monitoring of the health of the population, that will ensure the long-term conservation of the species. CALM staff will continue to work closely with the landowners to help implement the plan, which will help guide the management of this highly restricted species.

Val English and
Andrew Brown
Photos by Andrew Brown

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

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DEPARTMENT OF
Conservation
AND LAND MANAGEMENT
Conserving the nature of WA



Armed with sketch pad, pencils, pens and paints, an intrepid group of artists set off on a brand new LANDSCOPE expedition. See 'Awash with Colour' on page 28.



Most of us only know of the exotic pest ants that invade our kitchens. But what of the great Australian ants? See page 23.



Ningaloo Marine Park and Cape Range National Park lie side by side in our north-west corner. Read about how they are managed on page 17.



Four more conservation reserves now offer greater protection to areas in and around the Mitchell Plateau. See 'Parks of the Plateau' on page 48.



Scientists continue to develop ways to locate, track and trap animals for research. See 'Tools of the Trade' on page 41.

C O V E R

For many years, the decline of frogs in various parts of the world has puzzled conservationists. A breakthrough came in 1996 when scientists isolated a new kind of fungus that infects and may kill frogs. Western Australian research now under way is beginning to answer some initial questions about the fungus and its impact on our unique frogs. See 'In Pursuit of the Frog Fungus' on page 10.

Cover illustration by Philippa Nikulinsky

