



Greenough alluvial flats

Who would have thought that a half-hectare site (previously cleared and with buildings erected on it) smack bang in the middle of at least 130,000 hectares of agricultural land, could still contain plants not thought to exist in the area since the end of the 19th century?

When Senior Research Scientist Terry Macfarlane saw the site in 1983, he couldn't believe his eyes! Not only did it contain the declared rare long-flowered nancy (*Wurmbea tubulosa*), but also a number of native shrubs, perennial herbs and grasses. The long-flowered nancy population was subsequently fenced, but Terry was keen to see the whole site protected, as he was convinced that it was the last fragment of the original vegetation that used to cover the 130,000 hectares of the Greenough alluvial flats. The question was: how does one convince anyone that this degraded site is biologically important, especially when weeds outnumber native plants by a thousand to one?

The WA Threatened Species and Communities Unit (WATSCU) was

convinced. In 1998, with funds from the Natural Heritage Trust and the Department of Conservation and Land Management, staff from the unit researched the available literature and archives from the Royal Botanic Gardens of Melbourne. This enabled them to describe the original vegetation: a low forest of summer-scented wattle with scattered river red gum over grassland and herbland. The remnant plant assemblage at the site became classified as a Critically Endangered Threatened Ecological Community.

When the third round of Threatened Species Network Community Grants opened in 2000, it took little effort to convince the National Trust—one of three owners of the site—to support a funding application for an experimental restoration program. The application was successful; partly because of the status of the Threatened Ecological Community, but also because the

**Article and main photo by Sheila Hamilton-Brown
Insert photo by Terry Macfarlane**

National Trust were so committed that they had even enlisted the involvement of the Walkaway Primary School.

The school children collected seeds of native species from the site in the spring, propagated some of them in a local nursery and planted the seedlings out in the winter. At the same time, a number of trial plots were set up on the site, which were subjected to various chemical weed control and regeneration (smoke treatment and control burning) treatments to stimulate germination of soil stored seed.

All plots are still being monitored and the information collated to determine the best method to control weeds and restore the entire site—this will take a few more years yet.

Looking at this degraded site now, it is easy to dismiss the efforts at restoration as wasted time and money. But the work will restore a glimpse of the original native vegetation of the Greenough flats, as much a part of the natural heritage of the State as the numbat or malleefowl.

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

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Thirteen years in the making, the Cape to Cape Track offers a unique view of WA's most popular national park. See page 28.



Karijini's new visitor centre provides a cultural and environmental focus point for visitors. See 'Karijini Calling' on page 10.



Dirk Hartog Island is our largest island. It has a fascinating history and a valuable biodiversity. Find out why on page 17.



'Landscape at the Heart' is an account of the first LANDSCOPE Expedition to the Carnarvon Range at the edge of the Little Sandy Desert. See page 40.



Does the delicate work of Western Australia's botanical artists have a place in the high-tech world of science? See page 23.

COVER

Aboriginal names have always been part of Australia's history, and many of the well known names for Australian animals are in common use today. 'Ancient animals, ancient names' (page 35) makes a case for adopting more Aboriginal names for our native mammals. The brush-tailed phascogale, for example, was known to Nyoongar people as the 'wambenga'.

Cover illustration by Philippa Nikulinsky

