



ENDANGERED!



Net-veined gyrostemon

Charles Gardner collected the first specimen of net-veined gyrostemon (*Gyrostemon reticulatus*) from near Canna, east of Geraldton, in 1933. William Blackall then collected it in 1938 from near Wubin and Kalannie. The species was not seen for many decades and was thought to be extinct until Brother Van Veen, from the Pallottine Mission at Tardun, rediscovered two populations in 1990. The two sites where the species occurred were just two kilometres apart and contained only a few plants. The smaller population of only three plants occurs in a highly disturbed site with no other native species present.

In July 2000, the largest of the populations was burnt, and plants could not be relocated. However, in spring 2001, Brother Van Veen found the population and took staff from the Department of Conservation and Land Management to show them his discovery. More than 500 plants were found in the population at that time, and most of them were already in

flower. This was an indication that the species matures quickly, and increases in numbers following disturbances such as fire. The majority of the plants in this population were restricted to the windrow of a firebreak—a tiny area about 500 metres by 10 metres.

Most of the plants occur on private land in an area that is highly cleared for agriculture and is under threat from salinity. The owner of the land on which the largest population occurs is keen to conserve the plants, and has just completed fencing the remnant that contains them. This is an important step in conserving the species.

Net-veined gyrostemon is a shrub that grows to one metre tall, with crowded linear leaves 11–35 millimetres long. It occurs on yellow-brown sandy slopes in very dense shrubland with myrtle, wattle and sheoak species. The male and female flowers occur on separate plants and

the solitary flowers have pointed calyx lobes. Male flowers have 12–14 stamens, which end in sharp points and are arranged in a whorl. The female flowers have five to seven carpels with narrow, flattened stigmas about a millimetre long. The solitary spherical fruit occurs on a stalk.

Due to its rarity and extremely narrow range, the species is considered highly threatened and the department is developing an Interim Recovery Plan for it. The plan lists recovery actions—including maintenance of boundary fences, further surveys, collecting and storing seed, a possible translocation, stimulating germination of soil stored seed and regular monitoring of the health of the populations—that will help ensure the long-term conservation of the species. Departmental staff will continue to work closely with the landowners and managers to help implement the plan, which will guide the management of this highly restricted species.

by Val English

Photos by Andrew Crawford



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

LANDSCOPE

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Discover some amazing lifestyles of the little-known fungi of our south-west forests. See 'Forest fungi' on page 10.



One of WA's longest serving wildlife researchers looks at changes to nature conservation in the State. See 'For the times they are a-changin' on page 20.



Two unusual beetles are attracted to large bushfires. But why, and how do they find the fires and avoid getting burnt? See 'Australian fire-beetles' on page 36.



Two wildlife rescuers recently received Queen's birthday honours. See 'Kanyana to the rescue' on page 42.



What do wildlife officers do when a large whale weighing up to 80 tonnes becomes entangled? Turn to 'When nature calls...for help' on page 42.

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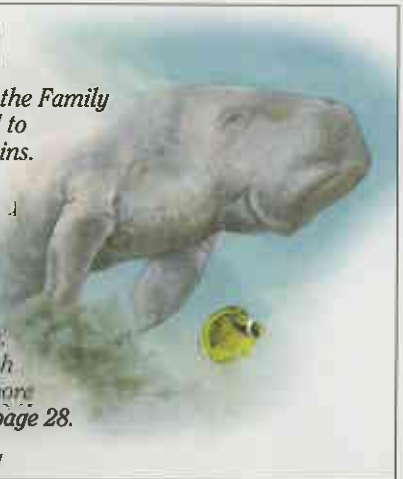
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COVER

The dugong is the only living species in the Family Dugongidae, and is more closely related to elephants than it is to whales and dolphins. One of the largest and most secure populations of dugong grazes on the extensive beds of seagrass in the shallow marine environment of Shark Bay. An estimated 10,000 dugongs, representing 10 per cent of the world's population, live in the bay. A new study, involving collaboration with local Aboriginal people, is discovering more about their movements in the bay. See page 28.

Cover illustration by Phillipa Nikulinsky



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