

endangered

by Vanessa Clarke



Beaked eremophila

The beaked eremophila (*Eremophila rostrata* ms) is one of Western Australia's 184 species of *Eremophila* or 'emu bushes' and is also one of the rarest. Only five populations are known, with a total of just 74 adult plants and two seedlings. Due to its restricted distribution, small number of populations, decline in habitat quality and continuing threats, beaked eremophila is declared as rare flora and ranked critically endangered.

Eremophila expert Bob Chinnock, of the South Australian Herbarium, proposed the scientific name *Eremophila rostrata*. The Latin word *rostrata* means 'beaked' and refers to the shape of the fruit, which in side view looks like a bird's beak.

Beaked eremophila is an erect shrub one-and-a-half to three metres tall with one-millimetre-wide terete (cylindrical), glossy, dark green, glabrous (non-hairy)

leaves. The pendulous, pink to red, unspotted flowers have stamens extended outside the flowers. Flowers have small calyx lobes two to three millimetres long and a corolla with two distinct upper lobes and three lower lobes.

Charles Gardner made the first collection of beaked eremophila from an area near Cue in 1927. Since then, further collections have been made near Cue and also some 280 kilometres south-west of there, near Perenjori. Plants near Cue are growing within a mining lease, while populations south of Perenjori are growing in highly disturbed environments along road reserves and in remnant bushland on a farm.

The species is found growing in two quite different habitats. Near Cue, it grows on stony, saline-clays at the base of quartzite hills in an open shrubland of wattle and *Eremophila* species over open low mulla-mulla (*Ptilotus*). South of

Perenjori it grows in clayey loam under open mallees and wattles over broom bush (*Melaleuca uncinata*) and tall mulla-mullas.

Due to the different habitats and the distance separating the two locations, the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) will be undertaking genetic testing of plants within each population. Perhaps two subspecies will eventually be recognised, and each subspecies will then be more geographically confined than the original species.

An interim recovery plan has been prepared and the Geraldton District Threatened Flora Recovery Team is coordinating recovery actions that address threats to the species' survival in the wild. The Natural Heritage Trust has contributed funds to assist in recovery actions for this species including fencing, surveying for new populations and rehabilitating degraded habitat.

Photos by Andrew Brown

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Erratum

The photograph in the Autumn 2004 issue of *LANDSCOPE* (mid left, page 52) is the rare *Diuris purdiei* not *Diuris corymbosa* as stated in the caption.

The photograph in the Summer 2003-04 issue of a snail on p. 56 and p. 61 was incorrectly captioned. The photo is of the introduced predatory snail *Oxychilus* sp., which is thought to be at least partly responsible for the extinction of the Pemberton and Albany snails, and is a threat to many of our native terrestrial snails.

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