

endangered

by Andrew Brown



Drummond's frankenia

Frankenia is a widespread genus of plants named by Linnaeus in 1753 in honour of Johann Franke, professor of botany and anatomy at Uppsala University, Sweden. *Frankenia* plants are small shrubs or herbs and are found in a variety of habitats such as coastal cliffs, dry creek beds and the margins of saline areas. Two species of *Frankenia* are listed as rare flora in Western Australia with Drummond's frankenia (*Frankenia parvula*) being the rarer.

Drummond's frankenia is a low, spreading shrub growing 50 to 80 centimetres across, with creeping stems, short, upright branches and tiny leaves to three millimetres long. The attractive pale pink flowers to 12 millimetres across, appear between October and March and may be solitary or in heads of two or three. The flowers have a mixture of spreading bristly hairs and short flat-lying hairs above but are hairless below and feature six or seven stamens and

a style which has three branches.

The species was first collected in the Mt Stirling and Mt Caroline areas by James Drummond in 1847. It was then thought to be extinct until rediscovered near Cunderdin and Yellowdine during botanical surveys in 2000–2001. Further collections were made near Kellerberrin and Kwyolin.

Habitat is white to brown sand over sandy clay on the edge of rises around the high water mark of drainage channels or, more rarely, across the pan of seasonal lakes. Broad-scale clearing of native bushland for agriculture has removed much of the species' former habitat and remaining areas are subject to changes to hydrology, resulting in rising salinity and water logging. One population is also being grazed by rabbits.

Frankenia parvula is declared as rare flora under the Western Australian *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950* and currently meets criteria for Endangered (EN) because of its limited area of occupancy and a continuing

decline in the quality of its habitat. The species is also listed as endangered under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Private property containing one population of the species has been dedicated as a conservation block through WWF-Australia's Woodland Watch Program and as a *Land for Wildlife* site. The area containing this population was fenced in January 2007 as part of the Avon Catchment Council's *Back from the Edge* project.

An interim recovery plan is being prepared for the species and recovery actions include more surveys, monitoring, rabbit control, seed collection and seed storage in DEC's Threatened Flora Seed Centre.

It is possible that there are more populations of *Frankenia parvula* in the central Wheatbelt. If you think that you have found this species, please advise DEC.

Photos by Wendy Johnston (main) and Andrew Brown (inset)

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