

endangered

by Andrew Brown and Rebecca Hayes



Woolly foxglove

The genus *Pityrodia* was named by Robert Brown in 1810 from a collection made in Queensland in 1802. It is a common, widespread Australian member of the Lamiaceae family, which includes the well-known genera *Hemiandra* and *Prostanthera*. Some 56 species have been described, 27 of which are found in Western Australia. All are commonly known as native foxgloves due to the resemblance of their flowers to those of that genus. The Greek name *Pityrodia* refers to the scale-like leaves of the type species.

Native foxgloves are evergreen perennial shrubs that range in size from 15 centimetres to more than three metres high. Many species are disturbance opportunists. That is, they germinate from soil-stored seed following fire or other disturbance, quickly mature, flower profusely and slowly age.

Woolly foxglove is a small shrub to 30 centimetres high with its stems and leaves covered in dense, white, woolly hairs. The wrinkled, egg-shaped leaves are

usually two to four centimetres long and one to 1.5 centimetres wide. Attractive deep red to pinkish-yellow flowers appear between late September and November. These are either solitary or arranged in clusters of three to five along a main stem. Each flower has five petals with wavy to tooth-like edges and four stamens that extend beyond the flower tube with the style extending further beyond them.

Woolly foxglove was first collected by John Septimus Roe in the nineteenth century and was described as a species of *Dasymalla* by Stephan Endlicher in 1839. In 1917 the species was placed in *Pityrodia* by George Druce. Native foxglove is currently known from a handful of locations over a range of 58 kilometres between Caron and Buntine in WA's northern wheatbelt, growing in areas of yellow sandplain with sheoak, bottlebrush, wattle and featherflower species.

Due to restricted habitat and threats associated with low population sizes, land clearing, road maintenance, weed intrusion

and lack of suitable disturbance, the species is declared as Rare Flora under the Western Australian *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950* and ranked as Critically Endangered. The species is not listed under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

With funding provided through the State Government's two-year, \$15 million *Saving our Species* initiative, woolly foxglove will be the subject of a five-year interim recovery plan. Recommended recovery actions include promoting awareness of the species, surveying, monitoring, mapping of critical habitat, obtaining biological and ecological information, weed control, seed collection, and disturbance trials to stimulate germination of soil-stored seed.

If you think you have found native foxglove in the Dalwallinu-Perenjori area, please advise the Department of Environment and Conservation.

Photos by Catherine Page and Rebecca Hayes

- 52 Controlling feral animals in the rangelands
New baiting techniques reduce fox, cat and wild dog numbers in the rangelands.
- 59 Feathers, fame and football
Work to protect native birds soars a wedge-tailed eagle to stardom.

Regulars

- 3 Contributors and Editor's letter
- 9 Bookmarks
If Trees Could Speak
Wild Land
In the Living Forest
- 29 Endangered
Woolly foxglove
- 30 Feature park
Cape Le Grand National Park
- 62 Urban antics
Karma

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