

# endangered

by Jill Pryde



## Meelup granite community

'*Calothamnus graniticus* heaths on south-west coastal granite' is a threatened ecological community that occupies about 40 hectares of near-coastal rocky outcrops. These particular heaths occupy a narrow band parallel to the western shores of Geographe Bay near Meelup in the south-west of Western Australia. The plant community occurs between boulders and on exposed slopes usually near headlands. The dominant shrub in the community is a one-sided bottle brush, *Calothamnus graniticus* subspecies *graniticus*. This grows up to three metres high, is endemic to the area and is a priority four species, meaning it is considered rare, but is not currently threatened. It becomes wind pruned, especially near the shore, and is dark green in colour, with deep red claw-like flowers. The shrub stands out against the

granite and provides a distinctive appearance to this community.

The Meelup granite community is species rich and includes plants that have adapted to specific conditions that include shallow soils and patterns of very wet and dry periods. The community includes the hop bush (*Dodonaea ceratocarpa*), basket bush (*Spyridium globulosum*), swishbush (*Viminaria juncea*) and rock thryptomene (*Thryptomene saxicola*), with smaller shrubs over sedges and a myriad of herbs including orchids, sundews (*Drosera* spp.) and native ferns.

The distinctiveness of the Meelup granite community was first identified in 1986 following a flora survey of Meelup Regional Park. The community, which is ranked vulnerable, is likely to have always been restricted in distribution and is confined to seven small occurrences within the park. The park is vested with the Shire of Busselton and its

management is overseen by the shire-appointed Meelup Regional Park Management Committee.

Specific threats to the community include too frequent fire and weed invasion. Some of the weeds recorded in the park are 'declared plants', which have the potential to be extremely invasive unless managed. Dieback disease, caused by the plant pathogen *Phytophthora*, has been recorded within the park and has the potential to impact susceptible flora. The pathogen spreads naturally through water travelling down slope, or it can be spread by soil movement caused by people, cars and horses. Management of weeds, fire and visitor impacts are major management issues and have been identified in the Shire of Busselton's 2008 draft management plan for the park.

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