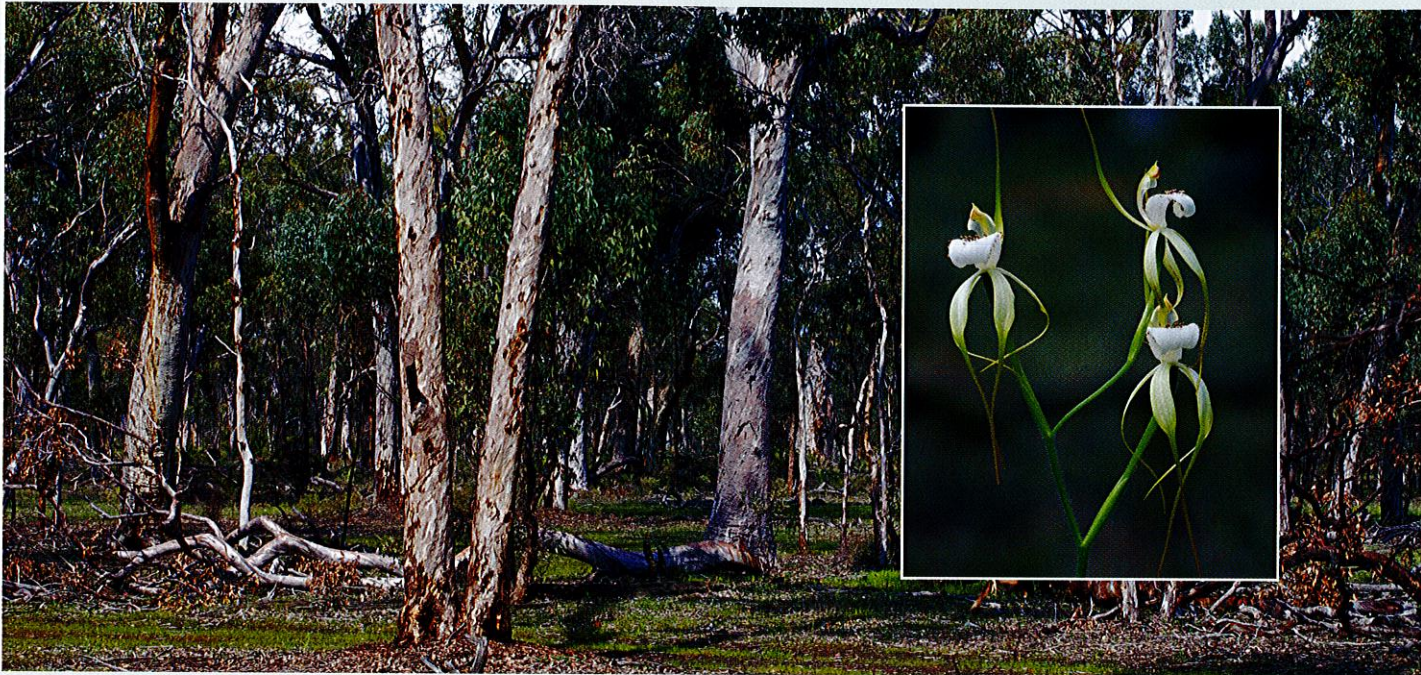


endangered

by Andrew Brown



Quindanning spider orchid

A member of the orchid family, the Quindanning spider orchid (*Caladenia* sp. 'Quindanning'), is a delicate herbaceous plant 14 to 35 centimetres high. Plants are dormant in summer and emerge from an underground potato-like storage tuber in autumn before growing through winter and spring. The single, erect, narrow leaf is eight to 16 centimetres long and seven to 11 millimetres wide, and covered in hairs one to two millimetres in length. The distinctive, prominently branched flower spike comprises one to four attractive, creamy-yellow spider-like flowers four to six centimetres across. Flowering occurs during September and October.

The Quindanning spider orchid is related to the darting spider orchid (*Caladenia uliginosa*) but is distinguished by its broader leaf and broader, flattened labellum with short, sparse fringe segments. The Quindanning spider orchid is distinguished from all other *Caladenia* species by its prominently branched inflorescence.

The first known collection of the species was made by Pat Johns when she and Keith Smith

found the orchid in a timber reserve near Quindanning in October 2004. The species has been extensively surveyed by native orchid expert Keith Smith, staff from the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC), the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority and members of the West Australian Native Orchid Study and Conservation Group (WANOSCG), with just three additional populations located since its initial discovery—two by Keith Smith in a timber reserve near the original population and one by DEC and members of WANOSCG in a nature reserve north of Quindanning. Less than 100 mature plants are known from the four populations.

The Quindanning spider orchid grows in open wandoo woodland on the margins of creek lines and seasonally wet flats along with *Melaleuca viminea*, *Chorizandra enodis*, *Craspedia variabilis* and several other orchid species including *Caladenia longicauda* subsp. *redacta*, *Diuris laxiflora* and *Prasophyllum gracile*.

The species is declared as rare flora under the Western Australian *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950* and ranked as critically endangered due to its highly restricted distribution

and the low number of mature individuals. Three of the four known populations are in areas that are subject to a mining lease and are potentially threatened by future bauxite mining operations. The largest population is also threatened by a rising saline watertable and fertiliser runoff from adjacent farmland. Introduced weeds and unseasonal fire are a minor threat.

The species is not currently listed under the federal *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

DEC's Swan Region Threatened Flora and Communities Recovery Team assists in overseeing the implementation of protective measures to ensure the long-term conservation of the species. An interim recovery plan has been drafted and its recommended recovery actions include further surveys, monitoring, protective fencing, seed collection, fire management and weed control.

It is possible that there are more populations of Quindanning spider orchid. If you think that you have found this species, please advise DEC by phoning the Perth Hills District on (08) 9295 9100 or the Species and Communities Branch on (08) 9334 0455.

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