

M*ynosotis australis*, a native annual commonly known as the southern forget-me-not, is in the Boraginaceae family along with the culinary herb borage and purple weed Paterson's curse. It has previously only been collected from nine locations in Western Australia, including Rottnest, Garden, Bald and Woody islands (collected from the latter by well-known artist and geographer Elizabeth Rippey), as well as near Albany, and Bridgetown.

Two collections from Rottnest Island, which were both gathered by ornithologist and herpetologist Dr Glen Storr, date back to 1956 and are currently housed in DBCA's Western Australian Herbarium. One, from The University of Western Australia, does not have a collection number but is labelled 'Barker Swamp 30 August', and the other is from shallow sand over limestone labelled 'Rottnest collection no. 178' and dated 28 August. The specimens look very similar.

In July 2016 the WA Herbarium received a request from Heidi Meudt at the Te Papa Museum in Wellington, New Zealand, for some leaf material from the Western Australian *Myosotis* to contribute to her investigation of the genetic relationships of southern hemisphere *Myosotis*.

So, from August to October Elizabeth Rippey, Jon Dodd and I searched for *M. australis* around Barker Swamp – the largest of three fresh water swamps remaining on the island (five others have been mined for marl to be used as road base). There were signs of extensive grazing by quokkas, numerous weeds and no sign of the *Myosotis*. Was it locally extinct?

Then, on 7 October, during a joint survey by members of the Rottnest Voluntary Guides Association and Wildflower Society of WA, Rottnest volunteer Richard Fox spotted a *Myosotis* plant near the western end of Porpoise Bay near Watson's Glade. This was the first of approximately 30 plants that were found at the site – three kilometres south-east of Barker Swamp; 60 years after the previous collection.



Forget-me-not, not forgotten any more Rediscovery of *Myosotis australis* on Rottnest Island

The plants were growing amongst low heath of *Acanthocarpus preissii*, *Guichenotia ledifolia*, berry saltbush (*Rhagodia baccata*) and scattered shrubs of *Acacia littorea*.

I returned to the site to collect leaves from 15 plants, which were stored in big teabag-like bags and sent to New Zealand. One voucher was sent to New Zealand and another lodged with the WA Herbarium. Another survey was carried out at the same time on Garden Island by DBCA's Adrienne Markey and Kate Brown, but only a few juvenile plants were found. A seedling that had been collected by Adrienne was grown to maturity to provide Heidi with genetic material from Garden Island.

So now having found *Myosotis* in a very different habitat from where it was first collected on Rottnest, voluntary guides and Wildflower Society members will be on the lookout for new populations of this delicate native herb this spring. Who knows where it will pop up next.



.....
Top *Myosotis australis*.
Photo – Steve Dillon/DBCA

Above *M. australis* habitat is often shared with quokkas, as evident by the scats.
Photo – Peter Coyle