

REVEGETATION

80 YEARS OF GRAZING, FENCING, THEN - AN EXCITING DISCOVERY!

Alison Doley

SINCE 1970, John and I have been fencing off remnant vegetation on our farm "Koobabbie", south-east of Coorow.

In 1986 and 1991 we fenced off two areas of Salmon Gum and Gimlet woodland. Selected in 1906 and cleared soon after, these timber belts had been grazed by sheep and cattle - and in one case, horses - for close to eighty years. The understorey was reduced to ancient survivors of acacia, hakea and pittosporum. Once stock were excluded, by the mid 1990s, nine *eremophilas* had established themselves at the first site, four at the second.

An article in "Landscape" on a very similar rare *eremophila* in the Dalwallinu district prompted me to ask Diana Papenfus if she could take a specimen to the Herbarium for identification. It was sent to Bob Chinnock in Adelaide and Diana rang back with the exciting news that it is a new species. In addition, a single specimen of another *eremophila* from the first area was identified as *E. sargentii*, a Priority 2 species.

The new species has the manuscript name of *E. koobabbiensis*. Our local nurseryman has found that it grows well from cuttings, and these have been planted at several sites around the farm. As well, material has been sent to Kings Park, and to Mary Squire's nursery at Mukinbudin.

Grazing - by birds, rabbits or kangaroos - was stripping the bark from the plants, so protective netting has been placed around them. The original plants are gradually dying back, so the plant probably has a limited life span, even without trying to cope with the present severe drought. Clearly, the seed has the capacity to lie in the soil for eighty years, then germinate when the conditions are right. The areas have not been burnt, so fire was not a stimulus.

Even small, apparently poor-looking, remnants can give you exciting surprises! John and I are convinced that even degraded remnants are far richer in reptiles, insects and seeds than revegetating in an open paddock, so the fencing continues - assisted of late by some very welcome NHT funding.

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(Nb: Bob Chinnock wrote about *Eremophilas* in WW 6/4, mentioning this exciting find.)



E. koobabbiensis m.s. under Salmon Gum and Gimlet. Fenced 1991.



Grazing protection around *E. koobabbiensis* m.s. Fenced 1986.



E. koobabbiensis m.s. grown from a cutting. Planted 2000.