

Rare Flora and Rehabilitation

By Ken Atkins, Wildlife Branch, Department of Conservation and Land Management

Many community groups are actively involved in the care of our environment, through various activities, which often involve rehabilitation of degraded lands. As we all know, successful activities require considerable planning and forethought - What is the objective? How are we going to achieve the objectives? Who will do the work? What do they need to do the work? The list of planning issues goes on and on...

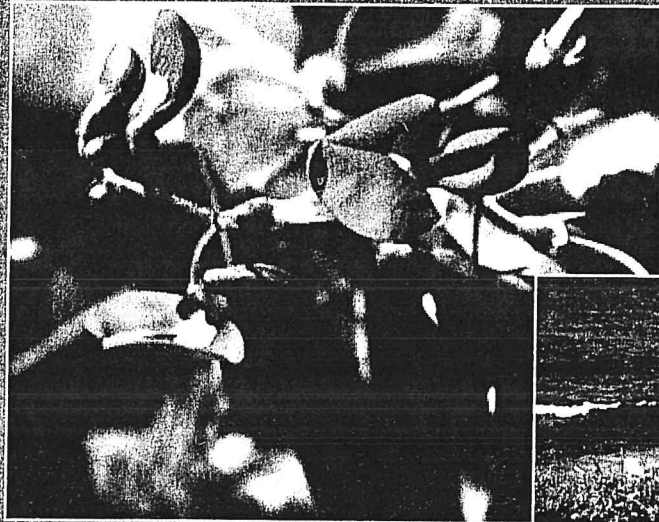
But does this planning also consider what negative impact could result from the work? This may not be a consideration because the overall project is to achieve an environmental benefit - but is this always the case?

One of the results of our environment being under so much stress and requiring rehabilitation is the loss of suitable habitat for some of our native flora (and fauna), and in extreme situations, these flora may be not only locally threatened, but threatened on a State or national basis. Such flora require special protection, and careful management of their environments to ensure that they do not decline further.

Under the State Wildlife Conservation Act, flora that is considered by the Minister for the Environment to be threatened is given special protection. These flora are termed 'rare flora', and they are legally called 'Declared Rare Flora', but in common language they are 'Threatened Flora'. Most Declared Rare Flora are also listed as 'Threatened' under Commonwealth legislation.

The special protection given to Declared Rare Flora means that these plants cannot be taken without the written permission of the Minister. This applies to any impact on the plants, either through direct actions (eg. cutting or digging up) or through indirect means (eg. burning or herbicide drift). Thus any activity that will

have any impact on Declared Rare Flora, whether it is intended to be for the benefit of the plants or not, must be done under a permit from the Minister.



Declared rare flora, Kennedia macrophylla, the Augusta Kennedia, occurs in a few coastal granite areas on the south coast. Rare flora such as this species could be impacted by coastal management programs if their occurrence is not first determined.

The permit process provides an opportunity to ensure that all necessary safeguards for the threatened flora population are considered. In this way we can ensure that our threatened flora is properly managed and not further threatened by accidental or inappropriate actions.

The Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) is responsible for flora conservation in this State. The Department has a specialised unit that coordinates threatened flora management, called the WA Threatened Species and Communities Unit. Through this Unit, threatened flora is ranked according to the degree of threat they are under, and recovery plans are prepared for the most threatened species (Critically Endangered).


A recovery plan is a plan of action to recover the threatened flora so that it is not threatened. These recovery plans include a range of management actions involving

landowners, agency staff, volunteers and others. Coordination of the management is through recovery teams, which include CALM specialists and management staff, as well as other representatives involved in the management of threatened flora, including members of the community.

Community groups who wish to undertake a rehabilitation program that involves Declared Rare Flora, or which may impact on such flora,



can contact CALM to see how their project may fit into a recovery plan, or whether it can proceed without damaging the flora or its habitat.

How does a group know if they have rare flora in their project area? CALM maintains a database of all known Declared Rare Flora sites, and community groups can request CALM to check the database and advise if there is any Declared Rare Flora in their area. The contact for this service is CALM Wildlife Branch at Kensington (ph 9334 0455) 

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Living Through an Antarctic Winter

By Jeremy Smith,
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Far to the southwest of Western Australia three small Australian settlements lie on the coast of a uniquely international continent, not owned by nations, where the environment is rigorously protected, mineral resources remain unexploited, and there are no weapons.

Australia claims more than 42% of Antarctica. This vast territory has a total winter population of about a hundred people, half being Australian. In summer numbers triple as scientists and support personnel exploit the milder days when the sun never sets and the coastal regions are alive with wildlife. In winter, nights are long, temperatures plummet, the sea freezes and most birds and mammals retreat northwards. Only maintenance crews and a few scientists remain behind.

Winter is defined as much by logistics as by solar peregrinations. To Antarctic expeditioners, winter begins with departure of the last ship and ends with the first

voyage of the next season, and may last for eight months. The summer pressures of hectic work schedules are eased, but other difficulties emerge.

wintering experience is one of the closest, most memorable social experiences of a person's life.

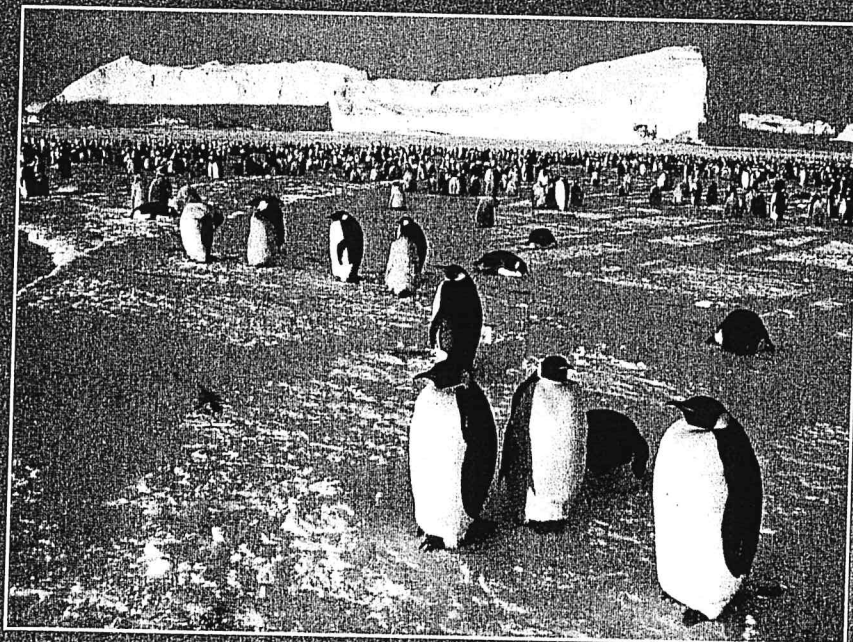


Photo: David Nelson

Inside the heated buildings temperatures are in the teens. A chef cooks the meals, although everyone takes a turn at cleaning duties. There are washing machines, films, music, telephones, the Internet. Life is generally comfortable but dangers lie within each little community. Usually an Antarctic

Step outside the warm buildings, and death lurks for the unwary. People have died, lost in blizzards, just metres from buildings they could neither reach nor see. Training, equipment and organised procedures are in place to counter such catastrophes. Of course there is no rescue service at the end of a phone, no ambulance, no fire engine. All services are provided by the community itself. Everyone is employed to do a particular job but all are also members of emergency teams. Sometimes it seems as though half our working time is spent doing things for which we were not primarily employed. It has to be that way: Antarctica is isolated and unforgiving to the unprepared. NASA thinks that Australian Antarctic stations are just about the nearest thing on Earth to space stations or colonies on Mars. For many years, expeditioners participated in

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