

Spiral-fruited wattle

Endangered flora of Western Australia

If you think you've seen this plant, please call the Department of Environment and Conservation's (DEC's) Moora District on (08) 9652 1911 or the Avon-Mortlock District on (08) 9622 8940.

Commonly known as the spiral-fruited wattle, *Acacia cochlocarpa* subsp. *cochlocarpa* ms is a sprawling, glossy shrub to 70 centimetres tall and up to three metres wide. It has slightly zig-zagging branchlets and narrow incurved phyllodes (flattened leaf stalks that function as leaves) up to 7.5 centimetres long, with seven nerves on each face. Spiral-fruited wattle produces stalkless, elongated, pompom-shaped golden flower heads, seven to 10 millimetres long, that appear from June to July.

Spiral-fruited wattle differs from a second subspecies *Acacia cochlocarpa* subsp. *velutinoso* ms, in its shorter phyllodes, velvety branchlets, phyllodes and legumes, and in its smaller, oblong flower heads. *Acacia cochlocarpa* subsp. *cochlocarpa* ms is also similar to four-nerved wattle (*Acacia tetra-neura*), which has four-nerved phyllodes and protruding bracteoles (small, often-paired modified leaf base) on the buds.

Spiral-fruited wattle was first collected over 150 years ago. Since then it has been recorded over a range of almost 250 kilometres, from north of Watheroo to the Swan River near Perth. The majority of these collections were made over a range of about 20 kilometres to the north of Watheroo, but most of these roadside populations appear to have been lost. During



The curved leaves and oblong flowers of spiral-fruited wattle. Photo – Bruce Maslin

surveys undertaken in 1996 only one extant population was located from old collection sites, and this was found in a disturbed roadside on clayey sand with laterite in the Watheroo area.

The presently known population is threatened by road and track

maintenance activities, inappropriate fire regimes and insect galling.

Due to the low number of extant plants and all individuals being in a single population, spiral-fruited wattle was declared as rare flora in November 1997 and ranked as critically endangered in 1998.

DEC has set up the Moora and Avon-Mortlock districts threatened flora recovery teams to coordinate recovery actions that address the greatest threats to the survival of the subspecies in the wild (see overleaf).

The subspecies is currently only known from a single population and DEC is keen to know of any others.

If unable to contact the district offices on the above numbers, please phone DEC's Species and Communities Branch on (08) 9334 0455.

Recovery of a species

DEC is committed to ensuring that critically endangered taxa do not become extinct in the wild. This is done through the preparation of a Recovery Plan or Interim Recovery Plan (IRP), which outline the recovery actions that are required to urgently address those threatening processes most affecting the ongoing survival of the threatened species in the wild and begin the recovery process.

IRPs are prepared by DEC and implemented by regional or district recovery teams consisting of representatives from DEC, Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, community groups, private landowners, local shires and various government organisations.



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Recovery actions that have been, and will be, progressively implemented to protect the species include:

Protection from current threats:

conducting further surveys; and regular monitoring of the health of the population.

Protection from future threats:

continued implementation of the approved translocation proposal and development of a fire management strategy; collection and storage of seed at DEC's Threatened Flora Seed Centre; maintenance of live plants away from the wild (i.e. in botanic gardens); and researching the biology and ecology of the subspecies. Other actions include ensuring that relevant authorities, landowners and DEC staff are aware of the subspecies' presence and the need to protect it, and that all are familiar with the threats identified in the Interim Recovery Plan.

IRPs will be deemed a success if the number of individuals within the population and/or the number of populations have increased.

This project is funded by the Australian and State governments' investment through the Natural Heritage Trust, administered in the Midwest Region by the Northern Agricultural Catchments Council.



Above: The habitat of spiral-fruited wattle. Photo – Gillian Stack

Below: Spiral-fruited wattle is a dense sprawling shrub. Photo – Gillian Stack

