

THREATENED ANIMAL EATS THREATENED PLANT

Today, the need for threatened plant and animal conservation is well known, but places where threatened plants and threatened animals interact are uncommon. One such area is a small granite hill in the central Wheatbelt where both the granite tetraetheca (*Tetraetheca deltoidea*) and the black-flanked rock-wallaby (*Petrogale lateralis lateralis*) occur.

The black-flanked rock-wallaby lives in rocky habitats and is easily distinguished by its black feet and black lateral stripe. Once critically endangered due to predation by foxes and habitat degradation, the animal has now been elevated to 'vulnerable', thanks to CALM's *Western Shield* baiting program.

Granite tetraetheca is a delicate, leafy, trailing shrub growing to one metre across. Strongly scented, attractive, dark pink flowers are borne on short stems from August to December. Because there is only a single population of about 150 plants and because of threats from grazing and

weeds, granite tetraetheca was ranked as critically endangered in September 1995. A draft Interim Recovery Plan was prepared in 1996 by CALM's Western Australian Threatened Species and Communities Unit (WATSCU). This plan aims to aid the conservation and recovery of granite tetraetheca by reducing the greatest threats to the species. Recovery actions such as regular monitoring of the population, rabbit control, weed control and collection and storage of genetic material are currently being undertaken as part of this plan.

It turns out, however, that the rock-wallabies may be one of the biggest threats to the tetraetheca's long-term survival in the wild. As the *Western Shield* baiting program has continued, rock-wallaby numbers have increased and are now placing pressure on their habitat from intense grazing. In particular, granite tetraetheca is being heavily grazed, damaging some of the plants so much that they have not



produced flowers.

Actions to counter wallaby grazing are now under way and include weed control and placing wire netting around the

plants. Ongoing monitoring and implementation of recovery actions by CALM's Merredin District Conservation Officer Alex Agafonoff and WATSCU, with funding support from the Natural Heritage Trust's Endangered Species Program, will see this unique part of Western Australia's biodiversity preserved.



Above: The delicate, pink flower of the granite tetraetheca.

Photo - Stephen Hopper

Left: The distinctive black-flanked rock-wallaby.

Photo - Babs & Bert Wells/CALM

Winner of the 1998 Alex Harris Medal for excellence in science and environment reporting.

# LANDSCOPE

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*Western Everlasting, see page 22, follows the same successful approach to protecting threatened plants as Western Shield did for mammals.*



*Beneath its black and burnt exterior, the common balga is giving up its secrets. See 'Believing the Balga' on page 10.*



*For 25 years, CALM's Wildlife Research Centre in Woodvale has been 'A Centre of Diversity'. See page 36.*



*The spectacular coastline of Torndirrup National Park has been years in the making. See page 28.*



*Read how locals, CALM and other agencies are working together to save the Lake Muir-Unicup wetlands. See page 49.*

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*'Moving Mala' (page 17) tells the story of the translocation of these endangered mammals from Australia's Central Desert Region to a small island off WA's north coast.*



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