



Threatened Flora of the Hunter & Mid Coast



Fairy Bells

{Homoranthus darwinioides}

Fairy Bells are a rare plant that is found in a restricted area in and around the Goulburn River National Park near Merriwa and outside the region in the Goonoo State Forest near Dubbo.

It is a small spreading shrub, with grey silver coloured foliage. The spectacular feature of the plant is its delicate hanging bell shaped flower. Each flower head has two flowers on a stalk. The flowers are a beautiful pale yellow colour that turns a reddish colour with age or can also change to red/pink once pollinated.

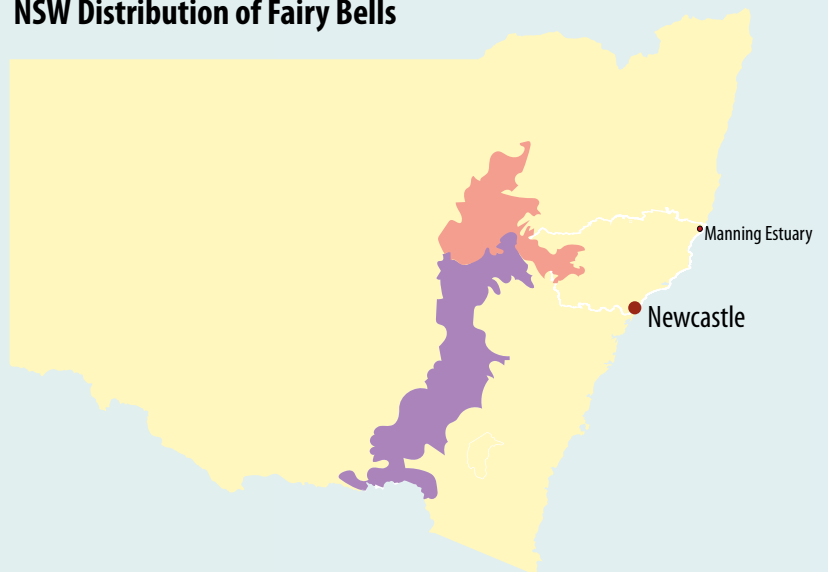
Fairy Bells is one of the 30 priority plant species under
Australia's threatened species strategy

Hunter and Mid Coast region



The areas shown in pink and purple are the sub-regions where the species or community is known or predicted to occur. They may not occur throughout the sub-region but may be restricted to certain areas. The information presented in this map is only indicative and may contain errors and omissions.

NSW Distribution of Fairy Bells



Description/Identification

Fairy Bells belong to the Myrtaceae family. The plant is a spreading shrub growing, usually 1 to 1.5m high. Flowers hang downwards and consist of two flower heads on a stalk. Flowering occurs throughout the year but mainly between March to December. Leaves are linear, 2-5mm long and less than 1 mm wide.

Habitat

Fairy Bells occur on very fine yellow and red sandy soil sometimes with an iron-rich gravel present. It is generally found on sandstone plateaus and gentle sloping to flat ridges. It prefers an open over storey canopy so that light filters through. Canopy cover ranges from 10-25% (Percentage of ground area occupied by foliage) in the known populations protected within Goulburn River National Park.

Fairy Bells are typically found in Red Ironbark – Brown Bloodwood – Black Pine heathy open forest. Species found in this woodland include: Red Ironbark (*Eucalyptus fibrosa*), Black cypress pine (*Callitris endlicheri*), Brown Bloodwood (*Corymbia trachyphloia*) Dwyer's red gum (*Eucalyptus dwyeri*),

Fairy Bells can occur as a single specimen or be the dominant understorey plant in a localised area where the shrubs can be entangled together.

Surveys completed in 2019 through Hunter Local Land Services, found four distinct populations within Goulburn River National Park including one new population not previously recorded. In early 2020, one of the populations was affected by fire. Little is known about fire recovery of this species so this now provides an opportunity to learn more in future years.

Why is this plant important?

Due to limited populations and highly restricted distributions of this plant, it is listed as Vulnerable on threatened species lists at both Commonwealth and State levels. Under the NSW saving our species program, Fairy Bells have been designated as a 'keep watch' species.



Caption: One of the features of Fairy Bells is the delicate hanging bell shaped flower, Courtesy, C Conroy



Caption: Fairy Bells can occur as a single specimen or form a dominant shrub understorey, Courtesy, T Hogan

Threats

As Fairy Bells are naturally rare and only found in a restricted region consisting of small plant populations, they face a greater risk of extinction from

- Habitat loss, disturbance and modification.
- Trampling, browsing or grazing in particular from feral animals such as rabbits, goats and deer.
- Inappropriate fire regimes.
- Erosion of fragile sandstone habitat.
- Localised extinction due to small population size and extent.

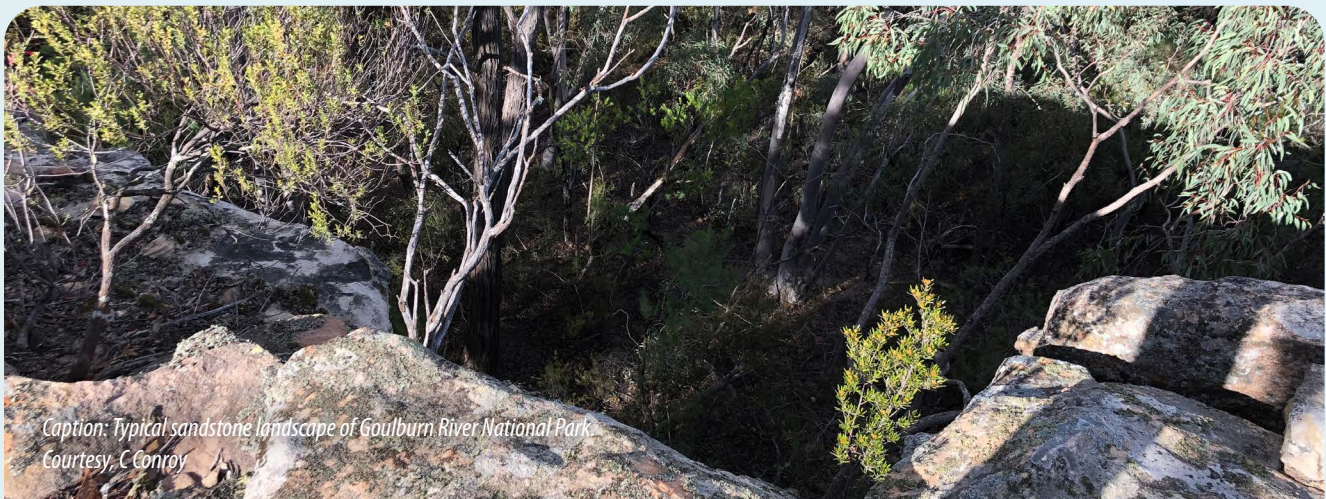


(Final Fire management Plan Goulburn River National Park & Munghorn Gap Nature Reserve, NSW NPWS 2002)

What is being done to protect Fairy Bells?

Across the Goulburn River National Park and Goonoo State forest Local Land Services, NSW Department of Planning Industry, Environment, Environment, Energy and Science (a sub) cluster of DPIE) and local communities are working on the follow actions:

- Seed collection.
- Seed banking.
- Investigations into germination and propagation from seed and cuttings.
- Rabbit and goat control.
- Surveying to locate new populations, within reserved and private land.



Caption: Typical sandstone landscape of Goulburn River National Park. Courtesy: C Conroy



Caption: Rabbits are a threat to Fairy Bells as they reduce the regeneration of this native plant through grazing. Courtesy: N Edwards

You can help conserve Fairy Bells



1. Survey your land for plants. If you are a neighbouring landholder adjacent to Goulburn River National Park report any sightings of Fairy Bells to Hunter Local Land Services.



2. Do not pick or destroy any plant.



3. Report plant records to Atlas of living Australia.



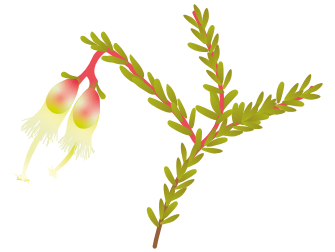
4. Spread the word about this very special plant found in our region.



5. Follow all directions from fire authorities to ensure that wildfires do not occur.



6. Participate in special events, field walks, community surveys and information sessions.



For more information contact

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This project is supported by Hunter Local Land Services, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.



Australian Government

National
Landcare
Program



Caption: Fairy Bells is one of those plants that looks fairly nondescript but upon closer inspection the beautiful tiny flowers grab your attention, courtesy, T Hogan.