

Threatened Flora of the South Australian Murray Darling Basin
Metallic Sun-orchid *Thelymitra epipactoides*

Endangered

Description

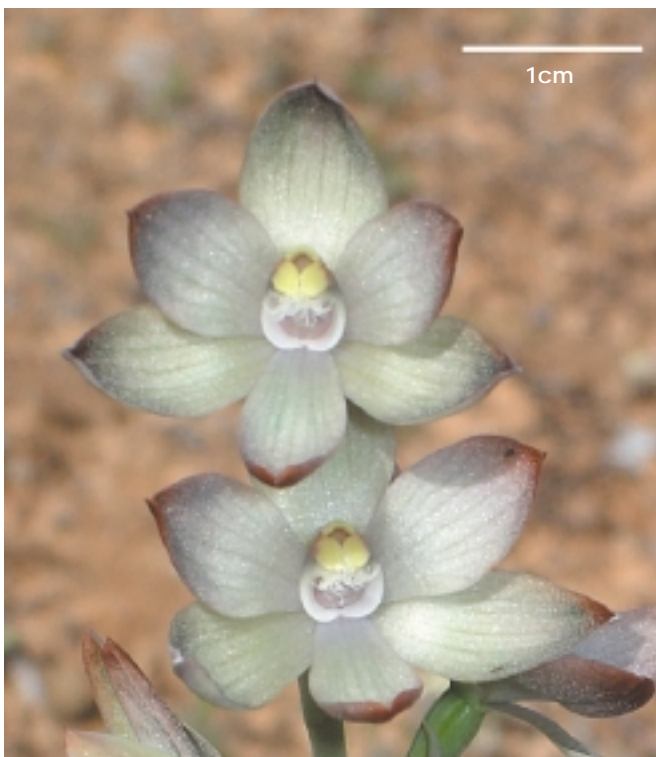
- This species grows in a strong, upright manner to a height of 20-50 cm.
- The single leaf is long and fleshy, lance-shaped at the end but tube-like at the base.
- Flower spikes comprise between 6 and 18 flowers.
- Flower colour is a peculiar iridescent greyish-green with pinkish tints, sometimes brown with a metallic lustre.

Ecology

- Flowering occurs between September and November
- Seed is released in December.
- Plants become dormant from the end of December to February.



Metallic Sun-orchid in flower.



Close-up of Metallic Sun-orchid.

Conservation rating

Metallic Sun-orchid (*T. epipactoides*) is listed as nationally **endangered**. Less than 90 plants remain in the South Australian Murray Darling Basin.

Threats



Small population size



Rabbit grazing



Stock grazing



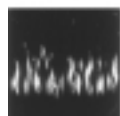
Kangaroo grazing



Weed competition



Illegal collection



Fire regime



Lack of new plants



Recreation

There are many threats, highlighted above, with different combinations of these threats relevant to different populations. Major threats include grazing by a variety of animals including rabbits, kangaroos, stock, and possibly caterpillars and snails. Highly invasive weed species including Bridal Creeper and Perennial Veldt Grass are competing with this species at some sites. Many of the populations are small and isolated which reduces their ability to successfully reproduce and survive. Illegal collection of plants and picking of flowers may be threatening some populations.

Habitat



Metallic Sun-orchid growing in a heathland habitat.

Metallic Sun-orchid occurs naturally in very open woodland or mallee dominated by heath species in the understorey.

The overstorey of the woodland communities are dominated by;

- Blue Gum (*Eucalyptus leucoxylo* ssp. *leucoxylo*)
- Southern Cypress Pine (*Callitris preissii*)
- Drooping Sheoak (*Allocasuarina verticillata*)

The overstorey of the mallee communities are dominated by;

- Coastal White Mallee (*Eucalyptus diversifolia*)

Understorey plants are typically dominated by native heaths and sedges including;

- Muntries (*Kunzea pomifera*)
- Black Rapier-sedge (*Lepidosperma carphoides*)

Distribution

Metallic Sun-orchid is found in South Australia and Victoria. It has a scattered distribution which represents a fraction of its former distribution. Within the South Australian Murray Darling Basin populations can be found near;

- Taillem Bend
- Coonalpyn
- Meningie



Distribution of Metallic Sun-orchid in the SA Murraylands.

How you can help

Please be aware of native plants and help preserve them by;

- preventing damage by grazing
- preventing removal/illegal collection
- preventing competition from weeds
- never picking native flowers, take a photo instead
- joining your local Bush For Life or Native Vegetation Group and help to look after a threatened plant population
- reporting any sightings of Metallic Sun-orchid to the contacts listed below.

Details of contacts

- Biodiversity Conservation Programs, Dept for Environment and Heritage, SA (08) 8222 9422
- Threatened Plant Action Group, 120 Wakefield St, Adelaide, SA 5000 (08) 8223 6301

Further Information

Biodiversity Conservation Programs
Department for Environment and Heritage
Telephone (08) 8222 9422
www.environment.sa.gov.au

Photos courtesy of C. Obst, M. Rose

Compiled by Environmental and Biodiversity Services

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