

Metallic Sun-orchid

Thelymitra epipactoides



Metallic Sun-orchid (close-up)

Description

- This species grows in a strong, upright manner to a height of 20-50cm
- 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 luster

Ecology

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

Conservation rating

Metallic Sun-orchid is listed as nationally endangered with approximately 250 plants recorded in the South Australian Murray-Darling Basin.

Threats

- Small population size
- Inappropriate fire regime
- Lack of new plants
- Weed competition
- Stock grazing
- Rabbit grazing
- Recreation
- Kangaroo grazing
- Illegal collection

Metallic Sun-orchids face many threats with different combinations of these threats relevant to different populations. Grazing by a variety of animals including rabbits, kangaroos, stock and possibly caterpillars and snails is a major threat. Highly invasive weed species including Bridal Creeper and Perennial Veldt Grass are competing with this species at some sites. Many 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-orchids occur naturally in open woodland or mallee dominated by heath species in the understorey.

The overstorey of the woodland communities is dominated by:

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

The overstorey of the mallee communities is dominated by:

- Coastal White Mallee (*Eucalyptus diversifolia*)

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

- Muntries (*Kunzea pomifera*)
- Black Rapiersedge (*Lepidosperma carphoides*)



Distribution

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

- Taillem Bend
- Coonalpyn
- Meningie

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 pick native flowers, take a photo instead
- Volunteering with NR SAMDB or join your local native vegetation group and help to look after a threatened plant population
- Reporting any sightings of Metallic Sun-orchid to the contacts listed below



Distribution of Metallic Sun-orchid in the SA MDB



Photo provided by Julianne Jakaitis

Metallic Sun-orchid in flower



Metallic Sun-orchid growing in a heathland habitat

For further information

Natural Resources Centre

South Australian Murray-Darling Basin

Murray Bridge: (08) 8532 9100

Berri: (08) 8580 1800

E: enquiries-samdb@sa.gov.au

www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/samurraydarlingbasin

