

Sandhill Spider Orchid, *Caladenia arenaria*



Caladenia arenaria (Matt Cameron)

Description

The Sandhill Spider Orchid (*Caladenia arenaria*) is classified as Endangered in NSW. Fewer than 2000 plants are believed to exist in the wild.

The species has the following characteristics:

- Five long spreading petals around a broad down-curved labellum (or 'lip')
- Densely hairy leaves, reddish at the base that are up to 10 cm long and 6 mm wide
- A flower stem up to 40 cm tall
- 1 or 2 pale yellow flowers, roughly 80 mm across

Distribution

Historically, the Sandhill Spider Orchid was scattered along the Edward, Columbo, Yanco and Murrumbidgee Rivers in the Riverina region. Its past distribution may have been even wider and encompassed a greater variety of habitats.

The species has undergone a substantial decline in range over the past century. Currently, its distribution is restricted to NSW, mostly on the south west plains and western south west slopes, including locations near Narrandera and Urana.

Habitat and Ecology

The Sandhill Spider Orchid occurs in woodland with sandy soil, particularly at sites dominated by White Cypress Pine (*Callitris glaucophylla*).



White Cypress Pine woodland habitat (Matt Cameron)

Sandhill Spider Orchid life cycle:

- Little is known about the species' reproduction, but like other *Caladenia* spp., it is likely that species is sexually deceptive, attracting pollinators by mimicking a female pollinator (e.g., a wasp)
- Flowering occurs between September and November, although flowering may not occur every year
- The plant spends hot summers underground, as a dormant tuber

Threats

The species is threatened by:

- Its small population size
- Hybridisation with other orchid species, which may reduce genetic viability
- Grazing by livestock and feral goats
- Limited ecological knowledge
- Competition with native plant species (e.g., White Cypress Pine)
- Human interference and industry activity

More information

To report a possible sighting of the orchid, contact:

Office of Environment and Heritage Environment Line
 t: 131 555 | f: 02 9995 5999
 e: info@environment.nsw.gov.au

For more information on the Wild Orchids Project:

Rhiannon Caynes, Murray Local Land Services
 t: 02 6051 2232 | f: 02 6051 2222
 e: rhiannon.caynes@lls.nsw.gov.au

w: www.murray.lls.nsw.gov.au/our-region/programs-and-projects/orchid-recovery-project



The Wild Orchids Project is a Saving our Species partnership between Murray Local Land Services, the Office of Environment and Heritage, Forestry Corporation of NSW, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Primary Industries - Lands, Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne, Australian Network for Plant Conservation, and private landholders.

The NSW Government's Environmental Trust is a key financial contributor to the Wild Orchids Project.

Information sources and further reading

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