

## SHORT COMMUNICATION

**Removal of *Gunniopsis* sp. Fortescue (M.E. Trudgen 11019) from Western Australia's plant census**

The name *Gunniopsis* sp. Fortescue (M.E. Trudgen 11019) (Aizoaceae) was added to Western Australia's vascular plant census in 1994; however, the representative voucher specimen was retained by Malcolm Trudgen 'pending publication of a flora list for the Hamersley Range, Karijini National Park'. This putative new taxon from the Pilbara bioregion is represented by a blank 'dummy sheet' at the Western Australian Herbarium (PERTH 03456927) which provides no descriptive or habitat information, and no specific locality details or collection date. *Gunniopsis* sp. Fortescue was added to the *Declared Rare and Priority Flora list for Western Australia* (Atkins 1995) following advice that it was only known from the South Fortescue Borefield Pipeline, and continues to be flagged as having Priority One conservation status (Smith 2012).

Examination of unpublished reports has revealed more precise locality information for *G.* sp. Fortescue. The voucher population (*M.E. Trudgen* 11019) was recorded by Trudgen (1992) as occurring on the Central Pilbara Rail trace, 5.7 km east of the South Fortescue Borefield Pipeline (AMG coordinates: 50K 596264E, 7503676N), with more than 1,000 plants noted. A second population of more than 1,000 plants (*M.E. Trudgen* 11375) is also noted from the rail trace at 3.5 km east of the South Fortescue Borefield Pipeline. These sites are recorded as Snake-wood (*Acacia xiphophylla*) tall shrubland over hummock grass (*Triodia longiceps*) on a gently sloping site (Trudgen 1992; Hamersley Iron 1998; Trudgen & Casson 1998).

A low resolution photograph of a pressed specimen of *G.* sp. Fortescue is reproduced in a regional rare flora identification guide (Hamersley Iron 1998); however, searches over the past 14 months have failed to locate either the voucher specimen for the phrase name or *M.E. Trudgen* 11375 (M. Trudgen pers. comm.). Moreover, *G.* sp. Fortescue has not been relocated in the field despite repeated searches at the aforementioned localities under different seasonal conditions over a period of 15 years (S. van Leeuwen pers. comm.), nor was it found by Malcolm Trudgen during surveys for the West Angelas rail line (an adjacent corridor traversing identical habitat) or for the clearing associated with the nearby Marandoo Accommodation Village and Hamersley Agriculture Project's central pivot irrigation cells (S. van Leeuwen pers. comm.). In the absence of material of this taxon, it is impossible to validate its taxonomic status or ascertain its conservation status.

Phrase names are an important way of recognising undescribed taxa in specimen and census databases until such time as they can be formally named. An important standard protocol for these names is to link them to a validating voucher specimen lodged at a recognised institution (Paczkowska & Chapman 2000; Barker 2005). In the absence of any available specimens, it is recommended that *G.* sp. Fortescue (M.E. Trudgen 11019) be removed from Western Australia's vascular plant census and accordingly from the *Threatened and Priority Flora list for Western Australia*.

No specimens from the Pilbara were known when *Gunniopsis* Pax was last revised (Chinnock 1983), and it is of note that there is only one specimen from the Pilbara bioregion in the collections at the

Western Australian Herbarium—a specimen of the Priority Three species *G. propinqua* Chinnock from east-north-east of Paraburdoo (*M. Maier & K. McCreery* BES MM 1105; PERTH 08311366). Survey botanists and industry representatives should remain alert to the need for high quality collections of *Gunniopsis* and to the possibility of undescribed species in the Pilbara bioregion.

### Acknowledgements

With thanks to Stephen van Leeuwen and Kevin Thiele for comments and discussion, and Malcolm Trudgen for his repeated efforts to locate the voucher specimen.

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