



MEDIA RELEASE

30 August 2019

Genetic rescue of the Button Wrinklewort ... one leaf at a time

Railway sidings and DNA testing have become the latest valuable assets in the quest to support one of Victoria's most endangered plants.

A team of eager surveyors, which included botanists, recovery project team members and site supervisors, visited the few remaining populations of the nationally endangered Button Wrinklewort (*Rutidosia leptorhynchoides*) this week to collect leaf samples for genetic testing purposes that will also provide insight into population trajectories.

This work is part of the Button Wrinklewort Recovery project, a project supported by the Glenelg Hopkins CMA through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

In total, 13 sites were visited and searched for these elusive plants. At each site, 20 plants were tagged and mapped, noting down nearest neighbours and an estimate of population size. Leaf samples were taken from tagged plants, which will be sent to Diversity Arrays Technology for DNA extraction. DNA data will then be analysed by Monash University PhD candidate Yael Rodger.

"The Button Wrinklewort is vulnerable to stock grazing and grass competition but can thrive in areas where regular burning keeps grass cover low," Glenelg Hopkins CMA Senior NRM Planner, Aggie Stevenson, said.

Although once common throughout south-east NSW and Victoria, the species can now only be found on a handful of public land sites with a burning history, such as roadsides, railways and cemeteries.

"Amazingly, our V/Line sites came up trumps, with Button Wrinklewort found on all four sites! Several of these populations are thriving with large populations identified – it means these V/Line managed sites are of national importance," Ms Stevenson said.

The information gained from this project will provide a clearer picture of how genetically diverse these small and isolated populations are.

"Ultimately, findings will be used to identify which populations may need a boost through the introduction of plants from other populations to improve viability," Ms Stevenson said.

Staff from Glenelg Hopkins CMA will continue working with V/Line staff to encourage ongoing management of sites which support this threatened species, along with other sites of equal significance.

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CAPTION: Aggie Stevenson, Glenelg Hopkins CMA (kneeling), Andy Arnold from Federation University (centre) and Kev Mahon, V/Line, were part of the team collecting samples from the Button Wrinklewort plants on the Bannockburn railway easement



CAPTION: (from left) Dr Steve Sinclair (Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research), Dr Ben Zeeman (Glenelg Hopkins CMA), Andy Arnold (Federation University) and Kev Mahon (V/Line) inspecting healthy population of Button Wrinklewort at Dobie railway reserve.

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CAPTION: The Button Wrinklewort plant in its dormant winter state.



CAPTION: Dr Steve Sinclair from the Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research, measures Button Wrinklewort plants with Glenelg Hopkins CMA Senior NRM Planner, Aggie Stevenson.

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