

# Basalt Rustyhood

*Pterostylis basaltica*

## Description

The endangered Basalt Rustyhood (*Pterostylis basaltica*) is an orchid species that has translucent, white flowers with green and brown stripes. The plant grows to about 30cm tall. It has nine to twenty leaves in a ground-hugging rosette (Image 3) that's usually withered by flowering time. It belongs to the Rufa (or Rustyhood) group of greenhood orchids, which have stem bracts (small modified leaves) rather than fully formed leaves. The plant flowers between October and January. The species was first collected in 1989 and described in 1993 and is very close to extinction.

## Distribution and habitat

Just two known populations of the Basalt Rustyhood exist; one on private land and the other on a nearby roadside reserve. The orchid grows among grasses and other small herbs in Western Basalt Plains grassland and Stony Knoll Shrubland. The species appears to have become locally extinct at another road reserve site.

The road reserve that accommodates this orchid, and other threatened species, such as Leprechaun Greenhood (*Pterostylis* sp. aff. *mutica*), Cygnet Greenhood (*Pterostylis* sp. aff. *cycnocephala*) and Dense Greenhood (*Pterostylis* sp. aff. *bicolor*), has now been protected under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* and the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

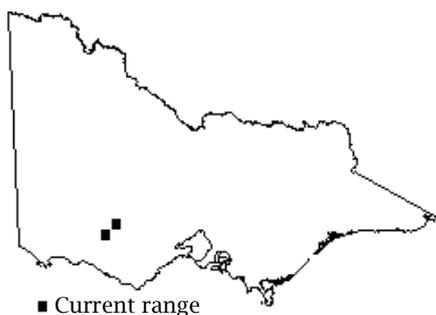


Figure 1 Current range of the Basalt Rustyhood  
Source: Dept. Sustainability & Environment



Image 1 Flower heads of the Basalt Rustyhood  
Source: Dept. Sustainability & Environment

## Conservation status

Basalt Rustyhood is listed as 'Endangered' nationally under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. Victoria's *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* identifies the plant as a species under threat, and the orchid is classified as 'endangered' in Victoria. Under the current International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) criteria it is listed as a 'Critically Endangered' plant.

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## Threats

It is estimated that over 99% of the native grassland habitat of Basalt Rustyhood has been lost to agriculture and weed invasion. The continued conservation of Western Basalt Plains grassland will benefit a number of other threatened flora and fauna species. Plants may also be threatened by grazing (by stock, rabbits and insects), herbicide spraying, illicit collection, vehicle movement, road works as well as unintentional trampling by visitors.



**Image 2 Roadside monitoring for the Basalt Rustyhood**  
Source: Dept. Sustainability & Environment

## Conservation

Since the discovery of this orchid, DSE staff and the community have monitored populations at both sites. The bi-annual monitoring involves collecting information on the number of plants present, number of pollinated plants, number of flowering plants and seed pod development.

Natural pollination rates are very low, however hand pollination has been quite successful, and seed has been collected and stored in the Victorian Conservation Seed Bank at the Royal Botanic Gardens.

Department staff and volunteers are hoping to locate more populations of the Basalt Rustyhood by determining its habitat requirements and conducting searches in similar habitats.

However it is unlikely that any plants will be found in any large reserves with good quality native vegetation as the only reserve within 100 km of the existing populations supports other orchid species.

Moyne Shire and volunteer groups, including Land Protection volunteers, the Australian Native Orchid Society, International Student Volunteers, Country Fire Authority and landholders have also assisted with the recovery of this species by taking part in roadside surveys, monitoring and maintenance.

If the species is to survive, existing populations need to be monitored, maintained and increased. More populations must be discovered or created by the introduction of propagated plants.

### You can help

You can do your bit to our help our threatened species:

- Contact the DSE call centre on 136 186 to report sightings of this species.
- Refrain from illegally collecting wildflowers.
- Get involved with your local volunteer group, Field Naturalists, Friends of Group, Landcare.
- For more information on the Basalt Rustyhood, type 'Basalt Rustyhood recovery plan' into an internet search engine
- For more information regarding threatened species in southwest Victoria and current projects, visit: <http://swift.bird.net.au/>



**Image 3 (left) The rosette of the Basalt Rustyhood**  
**Image 4 (right) Hand pollination of a flower**  
Source: Yvonne Ingeme (3) &  
Dept. Sustainability & Environment (4)

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