



PLANT

*Thelymitra mucida*

Plum Sun-orchid

AUS	SA	AMLR	Endemism	Life History
-	R	E	-	Perennial

Family ORCHIDACEAE



Photo: © Bob Bates

### Conservation Significance

The AMLR distribution is disjunct, isolated from other extant occurrences within SA. Within the AMLR the species' relative area of occupancy is classified as 'Extremely Restricted'.<sup>6</sup>

### Description

Slender Sun-orchid, 20-50 cm high. Leaf linear, thick, channelled, 8-15 cm long. Flowers one to three (rarely to five), to 20 mm across, pale blue with pink, or purple tints and veining, steel grey outside. Flowers open successively, and are rarely perfumed.<sup>3,5</sup>

Not recognised in SA until the 1970s. Two distinct forms in SA, a tall multi-flowered plant of peaty ti-tree swamps in SL and KI and a short, usually single flowered SE form.<sup>3</sup> *Thelymitra inflata* recently split from *T. mucida* (R. Bates pers. comm.).

### Distribution and Population

Also occurs in VIC, TAS and WA. In SA occurs in SL, SE and KI regions.<sup>2,4</sup>

Restricted in the AMLR to a few swamps near Mount

Compass.<sup>3,7</sup> Also from western Kangaroo Island and the lower SE. More common in WA.<sup>3</sup>

Post-1983 filtered AMLR record from north-east of Myponga.<sup>6</sup>

There are no pre-1983 records.<sup>6</sup>

### Habitat

Grows in moist to wet depressions, swamp margins and other low-lying sites in coastal and near coastal heathland, heathy forest and shrubland in dark sandy or peaty soils.<sup>8</sup>

Occurs singly or in small numbers on heavy clay soils, or in swamps or waterholes in areas receiving greater than 750 mm mean annual rainfall. Sometimes flowers while the leaves are still partly submerged.<sup>5</sup>

In the AMLR, restricted to low heath in sandy peat swamp margins where it grows with *Cryptostylis* sp. and other swamp-loving orchids.<sup>3</sup>

Within the AMLR the preferred broad vegetation group is Wetland.<sup>6</sup>

Within the AMLR the species' degree of habitat specialisation is classified as 'Very High'.<sup>6</sup>

### Biology and Ecology

Flowers from September to December.<sup>5</sup> Self-pollinating.<sup>8</sup> Flowers are short-lived and expand only in warm humid conditions.<sup>3</sup>

Hybrids have been reported with *Thelymitra ixioides* and *T. nuda*.<sup>5,8</sup>

Flowering is enhanced by summer fire or other disturbance.<sup>3,8</sup>

### Aboriginal Significance

Post-1983 records indicate the entire AMLR distribution occurs in southern Kurna Nation.<sup>6</sup>

*Thelymitra* spp. are recorded as traditional year round food resource for Aboriginal people in NSW (tuber eaten).<sup>1</sup>

### Threats

Current direct threats have been identified and rated for this species. Refer to the main plan accompanying these profiles.

### Further information:

Biodiversity Conservation Unit, Adelaide Region  
Phone: (61 8) 8336 0901 Fax: (61 8) 8336 0999  
<http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/>

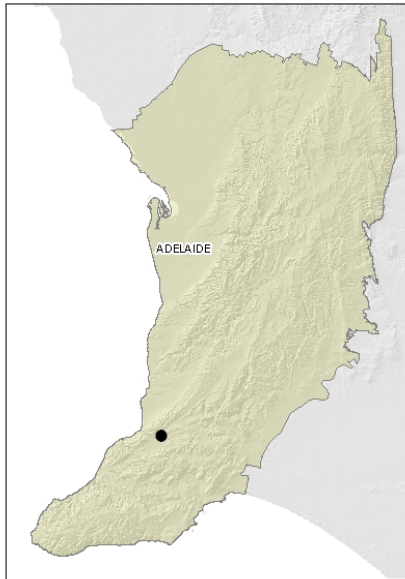
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Prepared as part of the Regional Recovery Plan for Threatened Species and Ecological Communities of Adelaide and the Mount Lofty Ranges, South Australia 2009 - 2014





## Regional Distribution



Map based on filtered post-1983 records.<sup>6</sup> Note, this map does not necessarily represent the actual species' distribution within the AMLR.

## References

Note: In some cases original reference sources are not included in this list, however they can be obtained from the reference from which the information has been sourced (the reference cited in superscript).

**1** Australian National Botanic Gardens (2007). *Aboriginal Plant Use - NSW Southern Tablelands*. Available from <http://www.anbg.gov.au/apu/index.html> (accessed August 2007).

**2** Barker, W. R., Barker, R. M., Jessop, J. P. and Vonow, H. P., eds. (2005). *Census of South Australian Vascular Plants, 5th Edition*. Botanic Gardens of Adelaide & State Herbarium, Adelaide.

**3** Bates, R. J., ed. (2007). *South Australian Native Orchids. Electronic version, August 2007*. Native Orchid Society of South Australia.

**4** Council of Heads of Australian Herbaria (2002). *Australia's Virtual Herbarium*. Available from <http://www.flora.sa.gov.au/avh/> (accessed July 2007).

**5** Department for Environment and Heritage *Electronic Flora of South Australia species Fact Sheet: Thelymitra mucida Fitzg.* Available from <http://www.flora.sa.gov.au> (accessed September 2007).

**6** Department for Environment and Heritage (2007). *Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Regional Recovery Pilot Project Database*. Unpublished data extracted and edited from BDBSA, SA Herbarium (July 2007) and other sources.

**7** Department for Environment and Heritage (2007). *Wetlands Inventory Database of South Australia*. Unpublished data, extracted October 2007.

**8** Jones, D. L. (2006). *A complete guide to native orchids of Australia including the island territories*. New Holland Publishers, Australia.

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