

DO YOU KNOW THESE SPECIES?

Photography & text by Margaret MacDonald

Comesperma sp.

(*come* = hair of the head, *sperma* = seed referring to the tuft of hairs on the seeds of most species).

Family: POLYGALACEAE

Four species of *Comesperma* grow in the Anglesea district, an endemic Australian genus of approximately 30 species. They are small perennial shrubs, subshrubs or twiners.

Flowers of the *Comesperma* family look superficially like those of the pea family but there are some significant differences. Leaves are alternate and simple, and the inflorescence is held in a raceme at the end of the flowering stem. There are five unequal sepals with one pair enlarged and often petal-like, and 3 smaller sepals. There are 3 or 5 petals with the lower petal lobed or pouched.

Love Creeper, *Comesperma volubile*

(*volubilis* = twining)

The most widespread of the four species, this attractive twiner can be found in woodland and heathland areas. Not apparent for most of the year, racemes of tiny blue flowers appear on slender stems in early spring and can often be seen extensively draped overhead. Love Creeper is almost leafless.



Blue-spike Milkwort, *Comesperma calygea*

(*calygea* = with a large cover)

This is a stiff, erect small subshrub that grows in heathland and arises annually from a rhizome. It bears a raceme of deep blue flowers on the top of the flower stems that grow to about 30 cm tall.

The leaves are usually found in the lower section of the flowering stem.

It is widespread and quite common.



Small Milkwort, *Comesperma polygaloides*

(*polygaloides* = resembling *Polygala*)

A small colony of this subshrub that grows to about 30 cm high was found in summer 2017 at Pt Addis after having been missing from the area for a long period of time. It usually has a single stem with pink to mauve butterfly-like flowers held in a terminal raceme. The small leaves are greyish-green with a bluish tinge. It arises annually from a rhizome.

As this species is listed as vulnerable in Victoria and also listed on the Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 this was a very significant and exciting discovery.



Heath Milkwort, *Comesperma ericinum*

ericinum = like the genus *Erica*

Flowering in spring, the purplish-pink flowerheads of this erect slender shrub are conspicuous among the other heathland vegetation where it can grow to about 90 cm high. It is uncommon in the area.

Racemes of flowers are found on the end of the main stem and on the side branches. Leaves are found along the stems.

