

# Threatened species of the Northern Territory

## Broom heath myrtle

### *Babingtonia behrii*

#### Conservation status

##### Australia: Not listed

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

##### Northern Territory: Vulnerable

Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1976

#### Description

*Babingtonia behrii* is an ascending myrtaceous shrub 1.5 to 3 m tall. Leaves are opposite and shortly petiolate. Inflorescences are axillary and pedunculate and the flowers are 5-merous and white. The stamens are grouped opposite the sepals, the anthers are adnate, and dehiscent by pores or short slits. The ovaries are inferior, or close to, each fruit is a loculicidal capsule and the seeds are angular and not arillate<sup>1</sup>.

Flowering: recorded in October.

Fruiting: recorded in April, July and September.

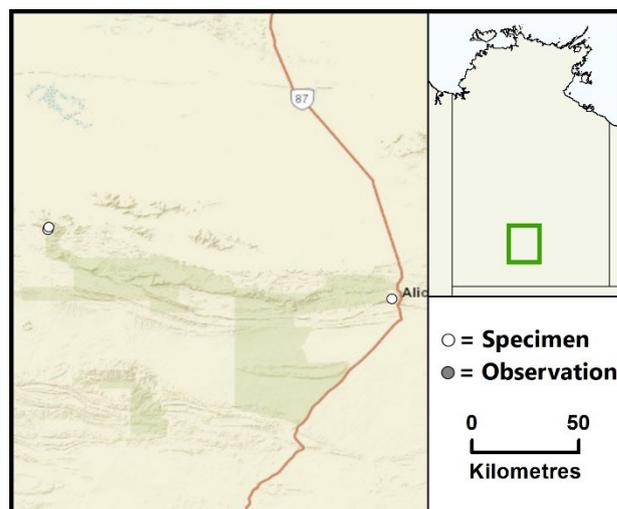
#### Distribution

*Babingtonia behrii* is known in the Northern Territory (NT) from a single population, located on Mt Zeil, which is the highest mountain in central Australia. The size of the NT population is unknown but is estimated at <1 000 mature individuals. Outside of the NT, this species is common in low rainfall areas with mallee or heath vegetation in Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria.



Credit: D. Albrecht

NT conservation reserves where reported: None



Caption: Known locations of the Broom Heath Myrtle in the NT ([nrmaps.nt.gov.au](http://nrmaps.nt.gov.au))

## Ecology and life-history

In the NT, this species is restricted to a single location on the southern side of Mt Zeil<sup>2</sup>. Mt Zeil has a different geology and corresponding different flora to other high peaks in the West MacDonnell Ranges and is geographically isolated from them. In the NT, *Babingtonia behrii* occupies a specific habitat type that is effectively limited to Mt Zeil. Consequently *B. behrii* is unlikely to be found elsewhere in central Australia. Adults of this species are known to resprout from the base following fire. In other parts of its range, this species is often found on sand rises and dunes and is therefore associated with low nutrient soils.

## Threatening processes

There are no known threats to this species. However, given its small size and restricted distribution, the NT population of *B. behrii* may be vulnerable to the effects of stochastic processes such as disease. This habitat has a narrow climatic envelope that is likely to be vulnerable to climate change impacts, particularly hotter temperatures, increased drought and fire severity.

## Conservation objectives and management

The NT population should be mapped and its size quantified. Monitoring of fire occurrence and adult, sub-adult and seedling responses would provide valuable information. Similarly, monitoring should aim to quantify any impacts of hot summers and severe drought.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Wilson, P.G., Heslewood, M.M. and Quinn C.J. 2007. Re-evaluation of the genus *Babingtonia* (Myrtaceae) in eastern Australia and New Caledonia. *Australian Systematic Botany* 20(4) 302–318
- <sup>2</sup> White, M., Albrecht, D., Duguid, A., Latz, P., and Hamilton, M. 2000. *Plant species and sites of botanical significance in the southern bioregions of the Northern Territory. Volume 1: significant vascular plants*. A report to the Australian Heritage Commission. (Arid Lands Environment Centre, Alice Springs.)