Threatened species of the Northern Territory

Sporobolus latzii

Conservation status

Australia: Not listed
Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

Northern Territory: Vulnerable
Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1976

Description

Sporobolus latzii is a fairly robust erect tufted perennial grass with flowering stems to almost 1 m high from a short rhizome. The leaves are minutely roughened, flat and to 16 cm long and 3.5 mm wide. Spikelets are 2-2.3 mm long and arranged in a panicle 11-13 cm long. The main branches of the inflorescence are solitary and spikelet-bearing throughout[1].

Flowering: recorded in May.

Distribution

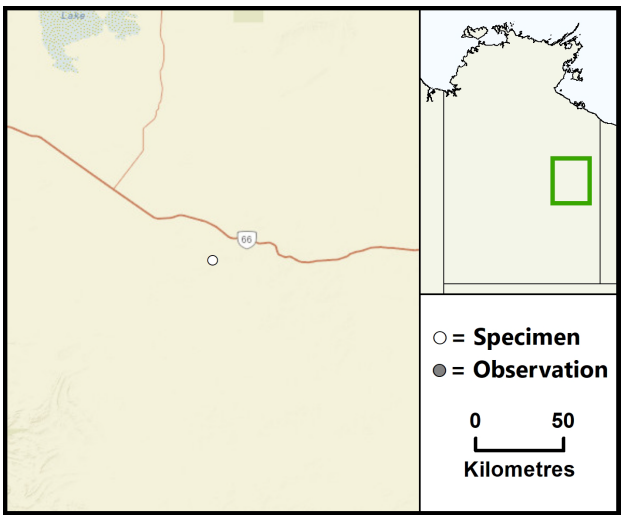
Sporobolus latzii is endemic to the Northern Territory (NT) where it is known only from the type locality in the Wakaya Desert (east of the Davenport Ranges and south of the Barkly Tablelands).

The species was first recorded in 1993 during a biological survey of the Wakaya Desert[2,3]. Some 40 swamps in the Wakaya Desert and additional similar swamps to the north of the Wakaya Desert were visited in the course of this survey work, but *Sporobolus latzii* was only found at the one site, and less than 200 plants were found there.

Credit: D. Albrecht

Given, however, that the region is relatively poorly sampled, existence of additional populations cannot be confidently ruled out. The swamps surveyed represent approximately one third to one half of the potential swamps in the region.

NT conservation reserves where reported: None.



Caption: Known locations of *Sporobolus latzii* in the NT (nrmaps.nt.gov.au)

Ecology and life-history

Sporobolus latzii occurs in clay soil on the edge of a Coolibah-fringed seasonal swamp. Associated species include *Cullen cinereum* and *Leptochloa fusca*.

Threatening processes

The Wakaya Desert experiences frequent, short-interval wildfire that may result in surface sand deposition into clay depressions, potentially making them unsuitable habitat for this species. Competition from Buffel Grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris*) is a potential future threat as this species is becoming more common in Wakaya Desert.

Mining is a potential threat to this species and given its highly localised occurrence, a 'no work area' must be delineated and maintained for its protection should mining development be proposed.

Conservation objectives and management

Further survey is required in the Wakaya Desert to determine whether additional populations are present, particularly to the east and south-east of the type locality. The establishment of monitoring plots would assist in gathering data on longevity of individuals, recruitment events and changes in population structure over time. An assessment of the extent to which mobile sands may engulf the *S. latzii* population is required. Invasion of the site by Buffel Grass also needs to be monitored and management actions undertaken to prevent it from impacting on the site. Careful fire management is also required to ensure that large hot summer fires do not burnt out the site.

References

[1] Simon, B.K. and Jacobs, S.W.L. 1999. Revision of the genus Sporobolus (Poaceae, Chloridoideae) in Australia. *Australian Systematic Botany* 12(3): 399, Figs. 2E, 16

[2] Gibson, D.F., Latz, P.K., Cole, J.F., Wurst, P.D. and Parsons,D.J. 1994. Flora and fauna survey of the Wakaya Desert, Northern Territory. Report to the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern territory, Alice Springs.

[3] 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 2: significant sites.* A report to the Australian Heritage Commission from the Arid Lands Environment Centre. Alice Springs, NT.