

Threatened Species of the Northern Territory

Malaxis marsupichila

Conservation status

Australia: Not listed

Northern Territory: Vulnerable



Photo: Bill Lavarack

Description

Malaxis marsupichila is a deciduous, terrestrial orchid. Its leaves are 15 cm x 7 cm, dark green, thin-textured, shiny and stalked, with wavy margins. The flower stem grows to 50 cm tall, green and purple. The light purple to dark purple flowers are about 8 mm across with three-lobed labellum or lower lip.

Flowering: Jan – Apr.

Fruiting: May.

Distribution

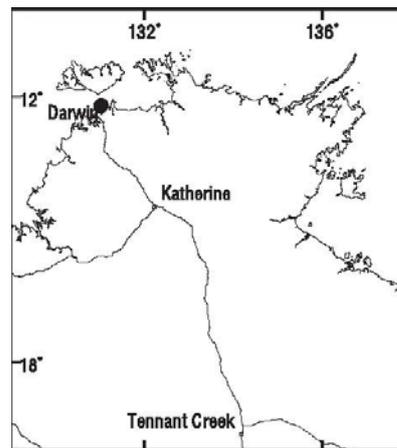
This species is an Australian endemic, known from northeastern Queensland and the NT. In the Northern Territory, it is known from only one locality, Gunn Point, where it was collected in 1984.

Conservation reserves where reported:

None.

Ecology

This species forms colonies in sandy or clay soils rich in leaf litter. It favours protected shady locations in moist soils along the edges of patches of monsoon rainforest and also in littoral rainforest (often close to the sea) (Jones 1988).



Known locations of *Malaxis marsupichila*.

Conservation assessment

Recent attempts to relocate this population at appropriate times of the year have failed. Despite its deciduous nature (and therefore a likely negative collection bias), it is considered that this species would have been encountered during the extensive rainforest surveys, of the 1980s (Russell-Smith 1991; Liddle *et al.* 1994), if it had been more abundant or widespread. Although the above data support a category of Critically Endangered based on the size of population, it is listed instead as **Vulnerable** (under criteria D1+2) given the ephemeral nature of the above ground parts and the limited amount of recent survey in the area.

Threatening processes

Potential threats are highly speculative but may include illicit harvesting, possible rural or industrial development in the area, random events such as cyclones and fire, and impacts of feral pigs.

Conservation objectives and management

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Complied by

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[April 2006]

References

- Jones, D. L. (1988). *Native Orchids of Australia*. (Reed, Sydney.)
- Liddle, D.T., Russell-Smith, J., Brock, J., Leach, G.J., and Connors, G.T. (1994). *Atlas of the vascular rainforest plants of the Northern Territory*. Flora of Australia Supplementary Series No. 3. (ABRS, Canberra.)
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