

Threatened Species of the Northern Territory

Stylidium ensatum

Conservation status

Australia: Endangered

Northern Territory: Endangered



Photo: I Cowie

Description

Stylidium ensatum is an annual herb to 22 cm tall. Leaves scattered along a short stem, sessile, obovate or orbicular, to 12 mm long, obtuse. Hypanthium linear. Sepals three free, two fused. Corolla pink or mauve, glandular hairy, paracorolla lobes acute, labellum attached to outside of corolla tube. Capsule linear, 8-12 mm long. (Bean 2000).

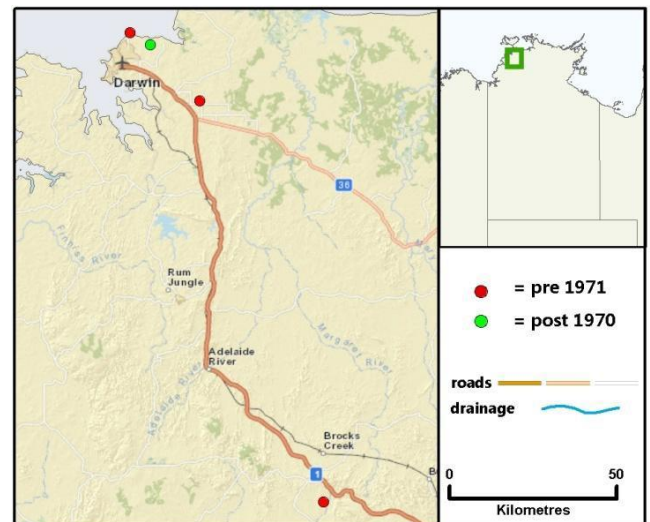
Flowering and Fruiting: June-July.

Distribution

Known from three localities close to Darwin with an additional 1946 record from near Hayes Creek some 150 km to the south. Five collections (*Holtze 514, 827, 831, 865* and *Tenison-Woods & Holtze*) made between 1885 and 1888 labeled Port Darwin or North Australia are at the National Herbarium of Victoria (Bean 2000). The exact locality for these collections is not known, but the number suggests that it may have been at least locally common.

Conservation reserves where reported:

None.



Known locations of *Stylidium ensatum*

Ecology

The habitat appears to be margins of drainage areas in damp heavy clay or peaty soil.

Conservation assessment

This species has not been collected since 1974. Flowers in June-July, later than many other *Stylidium* species, and early burning has probably affected it badly. Some populations are no longer extant and overrun with weeds (K.G. Brennan pers. comm.) or are now overtaken by urban development, i.e. there is a demonstrable decline. No additional subpopulations have been located despite

several flora and biodiversity surveys in the Darwin region over the last ten years. Recent attempts to relocate subpopulations near Darwin were unsuccessful. It is likely that only the Darwin regional subpopulations are threatened.

However, there are substantial areas of potentially suitable habitat south from Darwin towards Hayes Creek that are relatively poorly surveyed and it is likely that additional subpopulations exist. Apart from attempts to relocate subpopulations near Darwin there has been no systematic survey of potentially suitable habitat at an appropriate time of year.

This species qualifies as **Endangered** in the Northern Territory (under criteria B1ab(ii,iii,iv)+2ab(ii,iii,iv)), based on:

- the extent of occurrence is <5 000 km² and the area of occupancy is <500 km²;
- subpopulations are severely fragmented; and
- there is continuing decline in area of occupancy, area, extent and quality of habitat and number of mature individuals.

Threatening processes

Invasion of habitat by weeds, encroaching urban development and early Dry season burning before these annual plants have produced seeds are seen as threats to the species.

Conservation objectives and management

Further survey of the extensive areas of apparently suitable habitat to the south of Darwin are a high priority. Once extant populations are located, the areas need to be managed to exclude weeds, development and inappropriate fire regimes.

Complied by

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References

Bean, A.R. (2000). A revision of *Stylidium* subg. *Andersonia* (R.Br. ex G.Don) Mildbr. (Stylidiaceae). *Austrobaileya* 4, 589-649.