Threatened species of the Northern Territory

Freycinetia excelsa

Conservation status

Australia: Not listed
Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

Northern Territory: Vulnerable
Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1976

Description

Freycinetia excelsa is a small woody climber with stems to 7-8 mm in diameter. The leaf auricles each have a rounded apex and no distinct lobe. The bracts are orange to red. The male spikes are yellow to cream-brown; and fruit strawberry-red.

Fruiting: February.

Credit: K. Brennan

Distribution

This species is known from Australia and New Guinea. In the Northern Territory (NT), it has been recorded from 16 discrete rainforest patches from Bathurst Island to the Arafura Swamp.

NT conservation reserves where reported: Kakadu National Park.

Caption: Known locations of Freycinetia excelsa in the NT (nrmaps.nt.gov.au)
Ecology

It occurs in wet lowland rainforest and spring-fed rainforests in sandstone gullies.

Threatening processes

The impact of feral animals on this species is unknown but pigs in large numbers are likely to affect recruitment either through disturbance or browsing. Plants on the Tiwi Islands could be susceptible to severe cyclonic events. This species has not been collected while reproductive, despite re-survey throughout the year (K. Brennan pers. comm.). The potential threats to the species and its habitat are excessive ground water drawdown, coupled with grassy weed invasion and resulting intensified fire regimes following intensification of land use in adjacent areas.

One site is located near Glyde Point, near an area proposed as industrial estate and may be at risk. Detectability of sterile plants may be low due to the dense layer of the climbing fern Stenochlaena palustris covering the same tree-trunk substrate as utilised by Freycinetia.

Conservation objectives and management

A Recovery Plan for the threatened plants of the Tiwi Islands has been released and many actions have been implemented.

Research and further surveys are required to establish the status of these populations, the distribution of the species and the impact of feral animals. Conservation of the Glyde Point population is recommended. A monitoring program should be established for at least some populations.

References