

Threatened species of the Northern Territory

Bednall's dwarfmelon

Sinumelon bednalli

Conservation status

Australia: Endangered

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

Northern Territory: Near Threatened

Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1976



Credit: C. M. Palmer

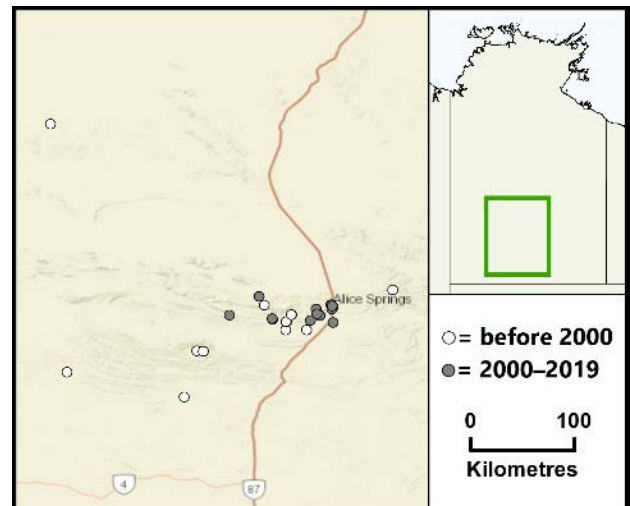
Description

Bednall's Dwarfmelon is a large greenish-yellow camaenid land snail, with a shell diameter of 20–26 mm and a weak reddish spiral colour band. The apex and spire are usually strongly and evenly elevated and there are 4–5 whorls¹.

Distribution

Bednall's Dwarfmelon is endemic to the Northern Territory (NT). It has been collected at several sites in the ranges of central Australia, from Wattarka National Park in the west to Trepkina Gorge (50 km east of Alice Springs) in the east. Additional occurrences in the southern NT may yet to be discovered.

NT conservation reserves where reported: Alice Springs Telegraph Station Historical Reserve, Owen Springs Reserve, Trepkina Gorge Nature Park, Watarrka National Park and Tjoritja/West MacDonnell National Park.



Caption: Known localities of Bednall's Dwarfmelon in the NT (nrmmaps.nt.gov.au)

Ecology and life-history

Bednall's Dwarfmelon is restricted to areas around Desert Fig *Ficus brachypoda* trees. Adults are active only after heavy rain. During dry periods they aestivate in loose litter under fig trees.

Threatening processes

Encroachment of invasive grasses, particularly Buffel Grass *Cenchrus ciliaris* and Couch Grass *Elymus repens*, into critical habitat for Bednall's Dwarfmelon is a significant threat throughout its distribution. At some localities Buffel Grass grows under and around the fig trees and contributes up to 80% of the groundcover. Such infestation leads to higher fuel loads, resulting in more intense and widespread fires in central Australia. In some cases the fig trees show signs of fire damage. Areas close to Alice Springs are also under threat from urban expansion and greater frequency of fires.

Conservation objectives and management

There is currently no management program for Bednall's Dwarfmelon in the NT.

Research priorities are: to conduct further surveys to determine whether the species occurs elsewhere; to identify specific threats to all of the known localities; and to continue monitoring at best-known localities.

Management priorities are: to protect the habitat from urban expansion; and to better safeguard the known localities through establishment of appropriate fire regimes.

References

¹ Solem, A. (1993). Camaenid land snails from Western and central Australia (Mollusca: Pulmonata: Camaenidae). VI Taxa from the red centre. Rec. West. Aust. Mus. Suppl. 43, 983–1459.