

Media Release:

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Rare Carnivorous Plant Rediscovered Near Darwin

A rare species of bladderwort *Utricularia singeriana* that has not been found around Darwin since 1926 has been rediscovered by scientists from the Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport (NRETAS).

NRETAS Biodiversity Conservation Scientist Jenni Low Choy said they came across a large population of the plant during flora surveys undertaken within the Litchfield Shire in Darwin's rural area.

"Bladderworts are an unusual family of plants and are known to be carnivorous as they can digest creatures living within the soil using their tiny, bladder-like traps on their roots," Ms Low Choy said.

"While the *Utricularia singeriana* has the largest flower of the bladderwort group, measuring up to 2cm in diameter, they are virtually impossible to find unless they are flowering, which only occurs between March and May when the flower blooms a stunning purple colour above and a deep maroon colour below.

"The sandy, waterlogged swamps around Darwin and extending to Katherine are a world hotspot for bladderworts with some 36 known species.

"Following this initial discovery NT Herbarium Botanist Ben Stuckey carefully searched the area and estimated that there were 15,000 plants growing in an area of about one hectare."

Mr Stuckey said *Utricularia singeriana* is a small herb that is endemic to the Northern Territory and is very rare, with only four previously known locations between Katherine and Darwin.

"The first collections of this species were made in the 1880's around the 'Port Darwin' area and then in 1926 by Florenz Bleeser, but despite extensive surveys around the Litchfield Shire the species has not been located in the greater Darwin area since then."

Ms Low Choy noted that this species is currently considered vulnerable to extinction because of the small number of sites where it occurs, however this find demonstrates the continuing potential for significant discoveries, even on Darwin's doorstep.

Further details about this species can be found in the Northern Territory Government publication *Lost from our Landscape: Threatened Species of the Northern Territory, 2007* or online at www.nt.gov.au/threatenedspecies

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**Media Note – for more information / interviews contact Jenni Low Choy on 8995 5014
Images – NRETAS Botanist Ben Stuckey sizing up *Utricularia singeriana* and *Utricularia singeriana* flower top and bottom**

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