

## THREATENED SPECIES OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY



### BIRDS NEST WATTLE

#### *Acacia pickardii*

#### Conservation status

Australia: Vulnerable.

Northern Territory: Vulnerable.

#### Description

*Acacia pickardii* is a shrub or small tree 3-5 m high. The stipules are spinose and the inflorescence globular. It is distinguished within the *A. victoriae* group by its sharp cylindrical foliage (phyllodes).

Galls commonly grow on the leaves of the species and can be confused as fruit by inexperienced observers.



*Acacia pickardii* (whole plant).  
(Photo C. Spencer)



*Acacia pickardii* (foliage and flowers).  
(Photo C. Spencer)

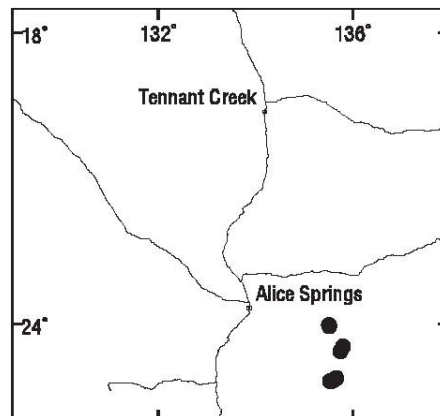
Flowering: August-November.

Fruiting is very rare and the species is thought to reproduce mainly by root suckering.

#### Distribution

In the NT, it is known from two small, and one larger, populations on the edge of the Simpson Desert (White *et al.* 2000; Maslin 2001). One of these is near, but outside, the Mac Clark (*Acacia peuce*) reserve. In South Australia, the species is known from three locations; two in the vicinity of Mt Gason and the third north of Lake Etamunbanie (Pandie Pandie Pastoral Lease). The western and northern limits of this species' known range occurs within the NT.

*Conservation reserves where reported:*  
None



Known locations of *A. pickardii*.

#### Ecology

*Acacia pickardii* typically grows on gibber-covered sandplains and stony rises and low hills, including mesas and tablelands, and adjacent flats. The species usually forms a low woodland or



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low open-woodland with an understorey dominated by either open chenopod-shrubland or open-grassland. Galls are common on the species and are produced by thrips.

### Conservation assessment

This species appears to be extremely rare in the Northern Territory. The taxon is **Vulnerable** (under criteria C2a(i); D1+2) due to:

- only several hundred individuals known from only three localities in the NT;
- no populations >2 km<sup>2</sup> in extent;
- the total population of <10,000 mature individuals with no subpopulation containing >1000 mature individuals; and
- a decline in the number of mature individuals is inferred due to poor recruitment.

Seedlings have not been observed.  
Seed set is extremely poor.

### Threatening processes

Grazing pressure from rabbits may be affecting recruitment (Davies 1995). The species does not occupy all suitable habitat in the region and it is possible that fire may have played a role in fragmenting its distribution. However surrounding fuel loads are typically very low. Disturbance by cattle is another potential threat.

### Conservation objectives and management

A national recovery plan for threatened arid zone Acacias has been prepared by NRETA together with other state agencies (Nano *et al.* 2006). The plan covers *Acacia pickardii*.

Recovery actions identified for *A. pickardii* in the Northern Territory include to:

- carry out targeted surveys for additional populations;
- establish formal protection for significant populations;
- carry out population and habitat monitoring at selected sites;
- implement management strategies for key threatening processes as required;
- undertake research on fire, seed and reproductive biology;
- collect and store seeds from all populations in recognized seed-banks;
- assess genetic population structure; and
- engage indigenous ecologists to provide input into the recovery process.

### Compiled by

Raelee Kerrigan  
David Albrecht  
Catherine Nano  
Chris Pavey  
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### References

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