

Action Statement

Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988

No. 144

Dwarf Kerrawang *Rulingia prostrata*

Description and Distribution

Dwarf Kerrawang *Rulingia prostrata* Maiden & Betche is a tap-rooted, prostrate shrub, with trailing branches up to 2 m long. The alternately arranged leaves are oval-shaped, up to 5 cm long and 3 cm wide, with toothed margins. Flowers are white or pink, and appear in spring clustered at the end of simple stalks (Walsh and Entwisle 1996).

Dwarf Kerrawang is found in Victoria and New South Wales. Over the past decade populations have been located near the Picton Lakes, in the Penrose State Forest area, including Hanging Rock Swamp, north of the Shoalhaven River near Mittagong, and in the Tomago Sandbeds, just north of Newcastle and the Hunter River (Gwen Harden *pers. comm.*).

In Victoria, Dwarf Kerrawang occurs on the Central Gippsland Plain in the Gippsland Lakes hinterland, from Blond Bay State Game Reserve near Bairnsdale westwards to the Holey Plains State Park near Rosedale (James 2000). There is a concentration of populations in and around Providence Ponds Flora and Fauna Reserve. It typically grows on peaty soils on the margins of wetlands dominated by *Lepidosperma longitudinale* in open locations.

Native vegetation surrounding the habitat can include the threatened, Flora and Fauna Guarantee-listed Forest Red Gum (*Eucalyptus tereticornis*) Grassy Woodland Community, a rare and depleted Coastal Manna Gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis* subsp. *pryoriana*) woodland community as well as Lowland Forest dominated by White Stringybark (*Eucalyptus globoidea*).



Dwarf Kerrawang *Rulingia prostrata*
(Photo: John Eichler)



Distribution in Victoria (DSE 2004)

Conservation Status

National conservation status

The Dwarf Kerrawang is listed as 'Endangered' under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

Victorian conservation status

The Dwarf Kerrawang is considered 'endangered' in Victoria (DSE 2003).

The Dwarf Kerrawang is listed as 'threatened' under the **Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988**.

Decline and threats

Results from comprehensive surveys in Victoria have shown that Dwarf Kerrawang is now restricted to a relatively small geographic area in the Gippsland Lakes hinterland. In recent decades it has disappeared from a number of previously known sites. Where it remains, clearing, grazing and alterations to drainage patterns are potential threats.

In its final recommendations the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC 1992) determined that Dwarf Kerrawang is:

- in a demonstrable decline which is likely to result in extinction;
- significantly prone to future threats which are likely to result in extinction; and
- is very rare in terms of abundance or distribution.

In Victoria, over recent decades Dwarf Kerrawang has disappeared from a third of all previously recorded locations and is now known from only ten sites (James 2000). The largest of these populations occurs at the Billabong Flora Reserve with other large populations on private land.

The habitat of eight of these ten extant populations has been altered from their natural state to varying extents by human intervention. Three of the largest populations survive in markedly altered environments.

Current threats to populations include:

- A lack of management prescriptions in place to protect populations on public land.
- A lack of agreements to protect the species and its habitat on private land.
- A lack of scientific knowledge of the ecology, life history and demography of the species. This includes a lack of understanding of its recruitment strategy.
- Invasion of habitat by weeds e.g. *Kikuyu Pennisetum clandestinum* Couch, *Paspalum Paspalum dilatatum* and Blackberry *Rubus* spp.

and/or native species e.g. *Burgan Kunzea ericoides*.

- Earthworks for dam construction, track maintenance and peat extraction that may directly damage populations or alter drainage patterns of the wetland.
- Damage caused by domestic stock and large populations of native wildlife or feral animals.
- Previous Management Actions
- The national conservation status of Dwarf Kerrawang has been changed from Vulnerable to Endangered.
- The Department of Sustainability & Environment (DSE) and Field Naturalist groups have carried out surveys of potential wetland habitat, including areas near historical records.
- Five populations of the Dwarf Kerrawang are currently monitored annually - three in conservation reserves and two on private property. Other populations have also been monitored less frequently during the past decade.
- Exclosure plots have been established at two sites to research the effects of grazing.
- At the Billabong Flora Reserve grazing licences were rescinded in 1994 and the reserve fenced in 1995 to protect the population from damage due to stock.
- Liaison and negotiation has occurred with a number of private property owners concerning management of the species.
- At Ben Winch Swamp, Longford, DSE has liaised with the property owner since 1991. Activities undertaken at the site include yearly monitoring, construction of an exclosure, erection of a fence around part of the population and collection, storage and distribution of seed. In 1996 the Latrobe Valley branch of the Australian Plant Society, the property owner and NRE co-operated to propagate and plant 100 seedlings. Seed has also been distributed to the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne and the Botanic Gardens in Canberra.
- At Meerlieu, private property containing habitat of Dwarf Kerrawang was purchased by Trust for Nature (TfN) in 1999 and will be managed to protect the population.
- A report has been prepared for DSE that describes all Victorian populations of Dwarf Kerrawang and their management requirements (James 2000).
- At Moormung Flora and Fauna Reserve, PV has fenced wetland habitat in to restrict vehicle access to the site.

Major Conservation Objectives

Long term objective

That the Dwarf Kerrawang can survive, flourish and retain its potential for evolutionary development in the wild.

Objectives of this Action Statement

1. Ensure no further decline in Dwarf Kerrawang populations on Crown land.
2. Protect Dwarf Kerrawang populations on private land to the extent possible, in co-operation with landowners.
3. Improve knowledge of populations trends, and the biology and ecology of Dwarf Kerrawang.

Intended management actions

The intended management actions listed below are further elaborated in Actions for Biodiversity Conservation database. Detailed information about the actions and locations, including priorities, is held in this system and will be provided annually to land managers and other authorities.

1. Contact land owners and managers and inform them of the presence and significance of the Dwarf Kerrawang, seeking their co-operation.

Responsibility: DSE Gippsland Region

2. Promote research into the recruitment strategy, biology and ecology of Dwarf Kerrawang that will provide managers with advice on appropriate, on-ground management prescriptions for the species.

Responsibility: DSE Gippsland Region

3. Assess the need to establish new populations and the feasibility of so doing. If necessary and feasible, assess the suitability of other wetlands on the Gippsland Plains as potential habitat for Dwarf Kerrawang.

Responsibility: DSE Gippsland Region

4. Provide information on the distribution and management requirements of Dwarf Kerrawang to West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority and relevant local government authorities for inclusion in the Regional Catchment Strategy and local planning schemes.

Responsibility: DSE Gippsland Region

5. Incorporate actions to protect, enhance and restore Dwarf Kerrawang habitat into the West Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy or its subordinate strategies via Biodiversity Action Plans. Implement these actions, according to priority, as resources become available, in

conjunction with other agencies, community groups and landholders.

Responsibility: West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority

6. Incorporate locations of Dwarf Kerrawang populations and their core habitat into relevant local planning schemes and environmental significance overlays and apply planning provisions to ensure their protection.

Responsibility: Shires

7. Incorporate Dwarf Kerrawang locations and management requirements into plans for relevant parks and reserves: Billabong Flora Reserve; Blond Bay State Game Reserve; Moormung Flora and Fauna Reserve; Providence Ponds Flora and Fauna Reserve; Trust for Nature, Meerlieu; Trust for Nature, Providence Ponds.

Responsibility: Parks Victoria, Trust for Nature

8. Protect habitat including fencing from stock and replanting where appropriate. Priority sites include Australian Paper Plantations; Ben Winch Swamp; Frews Road, Meerlieu; Lindenow South; Monkey Creek; Providence Ponds South.

Responsibility: DSE Gippsland Region, West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority

9. Manage weed infestations at sites as appropriate. Priorities include Kikuyu and Blackberry at Billabong Flora Reserve and Lindenow South, and Burgan at Australian Paper Plantations, Ben Winch Swamp, Billabong Flora Reserve, Blond Bay State Game Reserve and Providence Ponds Flora and Fauna Reserve.

Responsibility: DSE Gippsland Region, Parks Victoria, West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority

10. Plan and implement ecological burns and monitor impacts/response of Dwarf Kerrawang and associated species. Priority sites are Blond Bay State Game Reserve and Providence Ponds Flora and Fauna Reserve.

Responsibility: Parks Victoria

11. Monitor populations periodically, using VROTPop system.

Responsibility: DSE Gippsland Region, Parks Victoria

12. Collect and provide seed to suitable organisations for storage and propagation.

Responsibility: DSE Gippsland Region, Royal Botanic Gardens

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Further information can be obtained from Department of Sustainability and Environment Customer Service Centre on 136 186.

Flora and Fauna Guarantee Action Statements are available from the Department of Sustainability and Environment website: <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au>

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