VENUS-HAIR FERN
*Adiantum capillus-veneris*

Conservation status
Australia: Not listed.
Northern Territory: Vulnerable.

Description
This species is a rock-dwelling fern. Its fronds/leaves are tufted, to 36 cm long. The delicate and membranous leaf blade is 2-3- pinnate, triangular 5-20 cm long x 4-15 cm wide. There are 1-10 spore clusters (sori) along margins.

Ecology
In Australia, this species usually grows on limestone or sandstone rock, or on alkaline soils. At the Chewings Range (Hugh Gorge), it grows in quartzite rock crevices in deep sheltered gorges where the root zone is fed by permanent streams or seepage (White et al. 2000).

Conservation assessment
With fewer then 50 individuals known from the West MacDonnell locality and no indication of abundance in the Jasper Gorge locality, the population size and distribution of this species is difficult to estimate. The precautionary principle and consideration of the survey effort in...
likely habitat were taken into account in estimating these parameters. In the NT, this species qualifies as Vulnerable (under criteria D1+2), based on:

- its highly restricted distribution, with an estimated area of occupancy of <20 km²; and
- a small population size of <1000 individuals.

**Threatening processes**
The populations are probably secure in the short term (barring unforeseen events such as the cessation of spring waters or disease). In the longer term, populations may be threatened by global climate change.

**Conservation objectives and management**
The NT distribution of this species is not necessarily relictual and it could conceivably be a vagrant that has ‘recently’ dispersed to these locations via wind blown spore. The populations are probably secure in the short term. Searches are recommended to attempt to re-locate the Jasper Gorge population, and to monitor all populations.

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**References**