

Co-operative conservation

FUTURE OF OUR FERN

***Tectaria devexa* in trouble**

Tectaria devexa is a small tufted terrestrial fern growing in very thin pockets of soil on the cave walls where there is sufficient natural light and moisture. It has retreated to the cave entrance due to increased aridity and seasonal climatic fluctuations.

Although widely distributed in Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia and Vanuatu, the Caves district is the only known site in Australia. This relic population at Capricorn Caves declined to near-extinction in 2006 with only 21 plants remaining.

Working together for the future

Greening Australia secured a grant under the Threatened Species Recovery Program in partnership with Queensland Herbarium, Griffith University and the Society for Growing Australian Plants. WWF also provided funding to support recovery efforts.

Stage 1: This was to reproduce more ferns in a controlled environment at Heaton's Nursery in Nambour. This was beneficial, with 700 ferns successfully raised.

Stage 2: We maintained stock and reintroduced the fern back into its natural habitat. The drought presented challenges, together with the impact of foraging rock wallabies and brush turkeys. We protected the ferns with chicken wire and received a boost of rain in 2010 and 2011, resulting in increased natural germination on the rock face.

Stage 3: An irrigation system was installed and sections of the cave were regularly watered to help maintain moisture around the ferns during dry periods.

