



Ptisana salicina

Common Name(s):

King fern, Para, Tawhiti para, Horseshoe fern

Current Threat Status (2012):

At Risk - Declining

Distribution:

Indigenous to New Zealand and the South Pacific (possibly elsewhere). In New Zealand it is found throughout the north-western half of the North Island from inland Wanganui northwards. The Waikato is probably its stronghold where it is known from many remnants and forested areas in the west.

Habitat:

Favouring lowland, karst habitats (cave entrances and tomo shafts) and dark stream sides, often amongst supplejack (*Ripogonum scandens*) and parataniwha (*Elatostema rugosum*).

Features*:

A large, robust fern with fronds to 5 m tall arising from a stout, starchy base that was a traditional food for the Maori. The cane-like leaf stalks are green, 1–3 m long, and have a large basal, ear-like lobe that protects the uncoiling frond. The dark glossy green (or yellow-green in stressed sites) fronds are up to 4 m long by 2 m wide. The frond pinnules are entire, oblong, strap-like, and taper towards the tip. Midribs of the primary pinnae are swollen at the junction with the main stem. The spores are arranged in distinctive boat-shaped sori. The juvenile fronds are less robust, wilting easily on exposure to sunlight, with the strap-like pinnules often lobed or serrated. An unusual form with crested tips to the adult pinnules is sometimes found in the wild around the Kawhia area.

Flowering:

Specimens of suitable age may produce sporangia at any time.

Threats:

Feral and domestic stock, wild pig and goat browse are serious threats throughout its range. Indeed large specimens are only found where there has been intensive animal control, in inaccessible cave and tomo entrances or in steep-walled limestone gorges. Aside from animals the most serious threat to this species comes from plant collectors who have been responsible for the recent loss of several large, reasonably accessible populations near Kawhia.

***Attribution:**

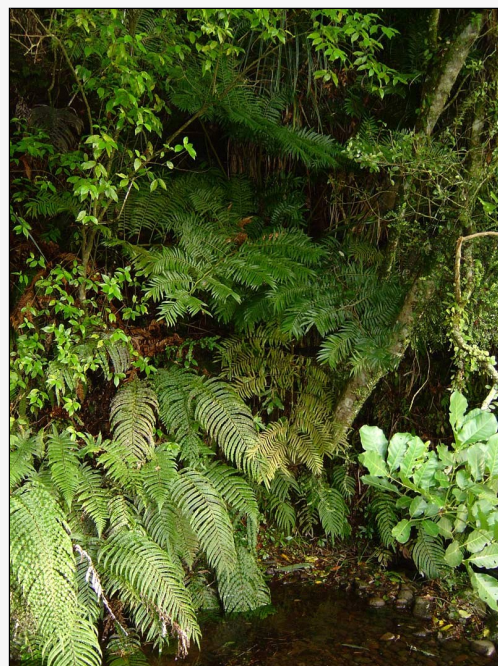
Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 1 August 2003.

References and further reading:

Murdock, A.G. 2008: A taxonomic revision of the eusporangiate fern family Marattiaceae, with description of the new genus *Ptisana*. *Taxon* 57(3): 737-755

For more information, visit:

http://nzpcn.org.nz/flora_details.asp?ID=133



Caption: *Ptisana salicina*
Photographer: Wayne Bennett



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