



Thelymitra pauciflora

Common Name(s):

sun orchid

Current Threat Status (2012):

Not Threatened

Distribution:

Indigenous. North, South, Stewart and Chatham Islands. Present in Australia where it occurs in Queensland, New South Wales, Australian Capital Territory, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania.

Habitat:

Mostly coastal to lowland, rarely lower montane. Usually in very open shrubland, on clay pans, gumland scrub, forest margins, in ultramafic scree and in open grassland. This species is also commonly found in urban areas along street verges in bark gardens and wasteland.

Features*:

Glabrous, terrestrial orchid. Tubers 10-20 x 5-10 mm, ovoid, fleshy pinkish white to pinkish grey. Leaf 80-300 x 3-6(-12) mm, erect, fleshy, canaliculated, dark or light green with purplish to maroon base, often spotted with rust, abaxially prominently ribbed, ribs often maroon, sheathing at base, apex acute to acuminate. Inflorescence 0.15-0.6 m tall, 1-1.5(-3) mm diameter, stout but slender, straight, dark green to purple-green to reddish. Sterile bracts 1-2(-3), 15-50 x 3-5 mm, linear to linear-lanceolate, closely sheathing, acute to acuminate, green or maroon, sometimes purplish. Fertile bracts 4-15 x 2-5 mm, ovate-acuminate to obovate-acuminate, sheathing at pedicels, green to purple-green.

Pedicels 1-10 mm long, slender. Ovary 5-12 x 2-4 mm, purple-green to red-green, narrow-obovoid. Flowers 1-8, 15-20 mm diameter, dark blue to mauve, sometimes white; opening only on very hot, still, sunny days, mostly entomophilous, tending to autogamous. Perianth segments 6-10 x 3-5 mm, concave, shortly apiculate; dorsal sepal lanceolate to ovate, obtuse to subacute; lateral sepals lanceolate to ovate, often asymmetric, acute; petals ovate to obovate, obtuse to subacute; labellum elliptic to lanceolate, acute, often smaller than other segments. Column 4.0-5.0 x 2.0-2.5 mm, erect from end of ovary, pale blue to dark pink; post anther lobe 1.8-2.5 x 1.0-1.5 mm, cucullate, tubular, gently curved, usually blackish-purple to reddish-brown, apex entire to emarginate, bright yellow; post anther lobe extension 0.4-0.7 mm; axillary lobes absent or sometimes present as 2 tiny incurved spurs on the lower apical margin of the post-anther lobe; lateral lobes converging, 0.5-1.0 mm long, digitiform, porrect at base, bent sharply upwards near the middle at 90 degrees, each with a subterminal tuft of white (or mauve) cilia that touch the ventral side of the apex of the post-anther lobe; cilia 1-1.5 mm long. Anther inserted above central column, 2.0-2.5 x 1.0-1.5 mm. Stigma situated at base of column, 1.5-2 x 1.5-2 mm, ovate-quadrate, margins irregular. Capsules 8-15 x 3-6 mm, obovoid, erect, deeply ribbed.

Flowering:

September - December

Fruiting:

November - March

Threats:

Not Threatened

*Attribution:

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 14 April 2007. Description subsequently published in Rolfe & de Lange (2010). See also Jeanes (2004).

References and further reading:

Jeanes, J. 2004: A revision of the *Thelymitra pauciflora* R.Br. (Orchidaceae) complex in Australia. *Muelleria* 19: 19-79.

Rolfe, J.R.; de Lange, P.J. 2010: Illustrated guide to New Zealand sun orchids, *Thelymitra* (Orchidaceae). Jeremy Rolfe, Wellington.

For more information, visit:

http://nzpcn.org.nz/flora_details.asp?ID=2273



Caption: *Thelymitra pauciflora* at Coopers Beach

Photographer: Bill Campbell



Caption: *Thelymitra pauciflora* on Spicer Road, Coopers Beach

Photographer: Bill Campbell