



Plantago obconica

Common Name(s):

None known

Current Threat Status (2012):

Naturally Uncommon

Distribution:

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (Marlborough, Canterbury and Central Otago).

Habitat:

Subalpine to alpine (1500-1800 m. a.s.l.) where it grows in acidic bogs with other small herbs, often in areas subject to flooding, often for protracted periods.

Features*:

Small rosette-forming prostrate herb, presumably perennial. Primary root short-lived, dying to leave a circular root scar cavity 4-5 mm diameter, a circle of adventitious roots developing around the scar periphery. Stem very short, simple, with tuft of pale brown hairs 6-8 mm long. Leaves sessile, c.10.0-36.0 × 0.4-1.8 mm, subulate or linear-subulate, thick, with lower surface rounded and upper surface slightly concave, entire and glabrous or with scattered obtuse teeth which are often hairy, these hairs usually sparse except towards base. Flowers solitary on a short ± appressed hairy scape 1-8 mm long, elongating to c. 3-11 mm in fruit, almost hidden by long stem hairs. Bracts 2-4 mm long, broad ovate-elliptic, membranous except for herbaceous keel, glabrous. Calyx 3.5-5.0 × c.2.0 mm; segments + elliptic, membranous except for herbaceous keel, narrow, glabrous. Corolla 4-5 mm long, membranous; lobes 1.7-2.5 mm long, elliptic to ovate; often appearing lanceolate because of inrolled margins. Stamens 3-5 mm long; anthers apiculate. Ovary with 820 ovules; style 6-10 mm long, glandular-scaly, and rather densely hairy. Capsule 4.5-11.0 × 2.0-3.5 mm diameter across base of cap (across area of dehiscence), ± ellipsoid; basal part usually 3-9 mm long, obconic or funnellform, conspicuous and persistent; dehiscent cap 1.2-2.0 mm high, obversely campanulate. Seeds 5-11, including several aborted ones, normal ones 1.0-1.9 × 0.7-1.2 mm, ± ellipsoid or ovoid-ellipsoid but tending irregular, rather flattened.

Flowering:

January - March

Fruiting:

February - May

Threats:

An apparently naturally uncommon, high altitude, biologically sparse species. However, because it is so small it is easily overlooked, and it is probably more widespread than is currently known. Further survey to ascertain an exact status is much desired.

***Attribution:**

Description based on Sykes (1988).

References and further reading:

Sykes, W.R. 1988: Notes on New Zealand *Plantago* species. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 26: 321-323

For more information, visit:

http://nzpcn.org.nz/flora_details.asp?ID=303