



Carex ophiolithica

Common Name(s):

North Cape Sedge

Current Threat Status (2012):

At Risk - Naturally Uncommon

Distribution:

Endemic. North Island, Te Pahi, North Cape Scientific Reserve (serpentines zone only).

Habitat:

A coastal species endemic to the 120 ha serpentinised zone of the North Cape Peninsula. Within this area it is a common species of open ultramafic scree, boulderfield, cliff faces and also under light scrub. It is also present on the plateau where it grows within the thick clay soils that have developed over the serpentinite.

Features*:

Stoutly erect, tufted bright green to green sedge of ultramafic substrates. Rhizomes short, ascending, slender, culms distinctly bulbous at base. Leaves 200-600(-800) x 1.8-3.2 mm, soft, ascending, double-folded, green to verdant-green; margins scabrid, weakly rasping (not harsh); keel on undersides weakly scabrid. Culms 150-920 x 0.5-1.2 mm, erect, glabrous in lower third, glabrous to weakly scabrid in upper two thirds, trigonous, shorter or longer than leaves when mature; basal sheaths to 20 mm long, pale brown to straw-coloured, nerves distinct. Inflorescence spikes 3-5, 10-40 x 3-4 mm, erect; upper spikes more or less approximate, lower 1(-2) spikes distant; peduncles 2-25 mm long; spikes subtended by narrow leaf-like bracts; these much longer than spike; terminal spike male, often with a few female florets in proximal part, female spikes slender, bearing 10-60 florets, florets overlapping but not crowded. Glumes 1.5-2 x 1.4-2 mm, shorter than utricles, glumes ovate, oblong, light green to pale brown, membranous, deciduous, with two lobes at apex, midrib light green to pale brown; awn 0.5-1.5 mm long, scabrid. Utricles 3-4 x 1.4-1.5 mm, narrow ovoid, elliptic, plano-convex or subtrigonus, pale green to live green when immature, usually pale brown or purple brown when mature, surface distinctly reticulate when dry, nerves pale and distinct, margins smooth; beak 0.5-0.7 mm long, pale, margin entire, crura 0.2-0.3 mm long; stipe 0.3-0.4 mm long. Stigmas 3. Nut 2.4-2.5 x 1.1-1.3 mm, dark brown to grey-brown, trigonous, ovoid, crowned with persistent style base.

Flowering:

July - June

Fruiting:

July - June

Threats:

Not threatened - a naturally uncommon, range restricted species, abundant within its sole known habitat at North Cape.

*Attribution:

Fact Sheet by P.J. de Lange (30 August 2005). Description based on de Lange & Heenan (1997).

References and further reading:

de Lange, P.J.; Heenan, P. B. 1997: *Carex ophiolithica* (Cyperaceae): a new ultramafic endemic from the Surville Cliffs, North Cape, New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 35: 429-436.

Thorsen, M. J.; Dickinson, K. J. M.; Seddon, P. J. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 2009 Vol. 11 No. 4 pp. 285-309

For more information, visit:

http://nzpcn.org.nz/flora_details.asp?ID=398



Caption: Surville Cliffs

Photographer: Peter de Lange



Caption: Surville Cliffs

Photographer: Peter de Lange