



Scirpus polystachyus

Current Threat Status (2012):

Coloniser

Distribution:

Indigenous. In New Zealand known only on the West Coast of the South Island, mainly in wetland south of Hokitika to about Okarito. Its range is still expanding. Common in Australia.

Habitat:

Coastal to low lying fertile to moderately acidic open wetlands, lake, pond and slow flowing stream margins. Usually in well lighted places, often with its basalt stems and rhizomes immersed in water.

Features*:

Semi-aquatic to terrestrial summer green sedge forming robust leafy clumps up to 1.8 m tall. Stems more or less triquetrous, basally very leafy, with 3-5(-8) evenly spaced, cauline leaves. Leaves numerous, much < stems, 0.4-0.8 m x 5-8 mm, basally channelled but becoming flattened in upper half, strongly keeled, margins and keel finely scabrid; sheaths light reddish-brown, lustrous. Inflorescence a terminal compound, irregular, fan-shaped, umbel bearing many unequal erect rays; secondary rays slender, more or less drooping at maturity; leaf-like bracts c.3, > inflorescence, upper bracts dark brown, strongly nerved. Spikelets more or less 4 mm long, ovate, in clusters of 2-5 at tips of rays. Glumes more or less 1.5 mm long, light brown to live, membranous, much darker towards apex, midrib thickened, not excurrent. Hypogynous bristles many, filiform, much > nut, folded, twisted or spiralled, very conspicuous at maturity. Stamens 3. Stigmas 3. Nut more or less 0.7 mm long, more or less trigonous but dorsal angle not well marked, cream.

Flowering:

September - February

Fruiting:

December - June

Threats:

Not Threatened but still very localised in its distribution. Because the first gatherings were made from near plantation forestry this species has been regarded as a weed introduced from Australia (Healy & Edgar 1980). The alternative, that it naturally arrived here by wind or avian dispersal was not considered at the time. This species has seeds suited to bird dispersal and it is not associated with plantation forestry in Australia. Its distribution in New Zealand overlaps with that of grey teal which feed in areas it frequents and are known to move between countries, so are a suitable seed vector. Therefore de Lange et al. (2009) treated it as a successful trans-Tasman colonist that while still uncommon is now actively spreading.

*Attribution:

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (30 August 2005). Description adapted from Healy & Edgar (1980) supplemented with details obtained from fresh plants and herbarium material by P.J. de Lange.

References and further reading:

de Lange, P.J.; Norton, D.A.; Courtney, S.P.; Heenan, P.B.; Barkla, J.W.; Cameron, E.K.; Hitchmough, R.; Townsend, A.J. 2009: Threatened and uncommon plants of New Zealand (2008 revision). *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 47: 61-96.

Healy, A. J.; Edgar, E. 1980: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. III. Adventive Cyperaceous, Petalous and Spatheous Monocotyledons. Wellington, Government Printer.

For more information, visit:

http://nzpcn.org.nz/flora_details.asp?ID=730



Caption: Herbarium specimen AK 282672.

Photographer: Peter de Lange



Caption: Herbarium specimen AK 282672, detail.

Photographer: Peter de Lange