



Carex applanata

Current Threat Status (2016):

At Risk - Naturally Uncommon

Distribution:

Endemic. South Island, Central Otago and Northern Southland Mountains (Pisa, Old Man, Old Woman, The Remarkables and Umbrella Mountains)

Habitat:

Carex applanata is an alpine species of eroding gravel slopes and, less frequently, snowbanks.

Features*:

Perennial herb forming patches to 200 mm diameter, tufts rather rigid, usually matted and flattened, spreading, surrounded by persistent dead leaves. Culms 8–60 × 1.3–2.0 mm, spreading, trigonous, edges faintly and usually discontinuously scabrid on one or two edges. Leaves falcate, 10–60 mm long; leaf sheaths stramineous, distinctly wider than leaves, closely sheathing culm; leaf blades channelled, yellow-green, green to bronze green, leaf margins and keel minutely scabrid, tapering to a weakly triquetrous acute tip, this mostly dried and eroded in mature leaves leaving a lacerate sometimes weakly cirrhose stub. Inflorescence a congested cluster of 2–4(–7) dark brown to chestnut-brown similar spikes, the lowermost subtended by a single leaf-like bract; spikes subsessile or sessile, rarely shortly stalked, erect, 4.2–6.3 × 4.2–6.8 mm, usually globose to ovoid, broadly cylindrical when immature, male flowers below female flowers. Glumes = to or slightly exceeding utricles, membranous, concavo-convex to concave; lower glumes narrowly ovate to ovate, acute, usually strongly keeled, keel apex prolonged, acute with keel prolongation extended as a minute scabrid awn; upper glumes ovate to broadly ovate, acute, mostly weakly keeled, keel failing just short of or flush with apex. Stamens 3, anthers 0.8–1.2 mm long, dark golden-yellow. Utricles 2.2–2.4(–2.7) × (1.2–)1.4(–1.9) mm, spreading at maturity, plano-convex, elliptic, elliptic-ovoid to ovoid, smooth, both surfaces weakly nerved, lower portion golden-brown or honey-coloured, upper portion darker golden-brown to brown, weakly winged, margins strongly scabrid in upper half to one-third. Stigmas 2; 0.9–1.2(–2.6) mm long. Achenes (1.0–)1.2 × 0.9(–1.0) mm, ovate to circular, biconvex, smooth, honey-brown; styles persistent

Flowering:

January–April

Fruiting:

February–May

Threats:

Carex applanata does not seem to be threatened. Beyond observations of browsing from hares (*Lepus europaeus occidentalis*), which does not seem to cause the ill-thrift of plants the species seems secure in its alpine habitats. In those areas exotic plant are scarce, the most commonly seen is the hawkweed (*Pilosella officinarum*), which is not known to co-occur with *C. applanata*. Although the total area occupied by *Carex applanata* is believed to be small (c. 4 ha spread over 10 sites), the total number of plants is believed to number in the 1000s. For this reason it is recommended that the species be listed as 'At Risk / Naturally Uncommon' qualified 'Range Restricted' and 'Data Poor'.

***Attribution:**

Fact Sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange (16 May 2016). Description adapted from Thorsen & de Lange (2016)

References and further reading:

Thorsen, M.J.; de Lange, P.J. 2016: *Carex applanata* (Cyperaceae), a new species from southern New Zealand. New Zealand Journal of Botany 54 (2) DOI: 10.1080/0028825X.2016.1167092

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