

Poranthera petalifera



Poranthera petalifera
Photos: P. Black.

FAMILY: EUPHORBIACEAE

BOTANICAL NAME: *Poranthera petalifera*,
(Orchard & J.B.Davies) Halford & R.J.F.Hend.,
Austrobaileya 7: 22 (2005)

COMMON NAME: mountain poranthera

COMMONWEALTH STATUS: (*EPBC Act*)
Vulnerable

TASMANIAN STATUS: (*TSP Act*) vulnerable

Description

A spreading, perennial herb with annual stems that die back to a slightly woody base (between 0.2-0.3 metres long and 1 mm in diameter). This species is freely branched and is found scrambling over rocks and adjacent plants. **Leaves:** The leaves are in opposite pairs along the stems, lance-shaped and taper into a short stalk at the base (between 6-7 mm long, 1-1.7 mm wide). The outgrowths at the base of the stalk (stipules) are white, oval to sickle-shaped and up to 1.1 mm long. The margins are bent backwards towards the underside of the leaf and nearly reach the midrib. **Flowers:** The male and female flowers are on separate plants. They are borne singly on stalks in the axils (where the stem meets the leaf) of the upper leaves. The male flowers are white and have 5 lance-shaped petals. The female flowers have leafy structures surrounding the petals (sepals) that are greenish-white. The 5 petals are clear and linear to lance-shaped. This species flowers in December. **Fruit:** The nearly spherical fruit are approximately 1.2 mm long and 2 mm in diameter. There are 6 pale orange-brown seeds that have smooth surfaces with a white tessellated pattern. Fruit is found in June (description from Orchard & Davies 1985). **This species was previously known as *Oreoporanthera petalifera*.**

Distribution and Habitat

This species is endemic to Tasmania and is currently known only from Mount Anne. It is locally abundant in this area between 750 and 1000m above sea level. While now included in the genus *Poranthera*, another *Oreoporanthera* species (*alpina*) was known from New Zealand. The discovery of this species has extended the range of this previously monotypic genus (Orchard & Davies 1985; Gilfedder 1989).



Key Sites and Populations

Surveys in January 2005 by personnel with the Threatened Species Section located approximately 2000 plants from 15 locations at the Mt Anne site. Potential habitat for *Poranthera petalifera* covers approximately 2–3 kilometres in length and varies between 10 to 50 metres in width (Gilfedder 1989).

Known Reserves

Poranthera petalifera is reserved in Southwest National Park.

Ecology and Management

Poranthera petalifera occurs only in a high altitude, sub-alpine karst community. Species restricted to one or two small sites are extremely vulnerable to extinction through chance events (known as stochastic risk). Any local event, such as wildfire or landslip, may impact or destroy the entire population. Wildfire in dry periods is believed to pose the greatest risk to *Poranthera petalifera*, as it occurs in a fire sensitive vegetation community. Part of the population is at risk from trampling (Threatened Species Unit 2006).

Given the limited range of *Poranthera petalifera* compared with the suitable habitat it could potentially inhabit, it is likely that the species may occur as relict populations already impacted on by the effects of the changing global climate, and possibly by increased fire regimes resulting from human disturbance. The trend towards a warmer drier climate may therefore further threaten the species (loss of climatic habitat caused by anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases). Climate change is a threatening process listed on the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Conservation Status Assessment

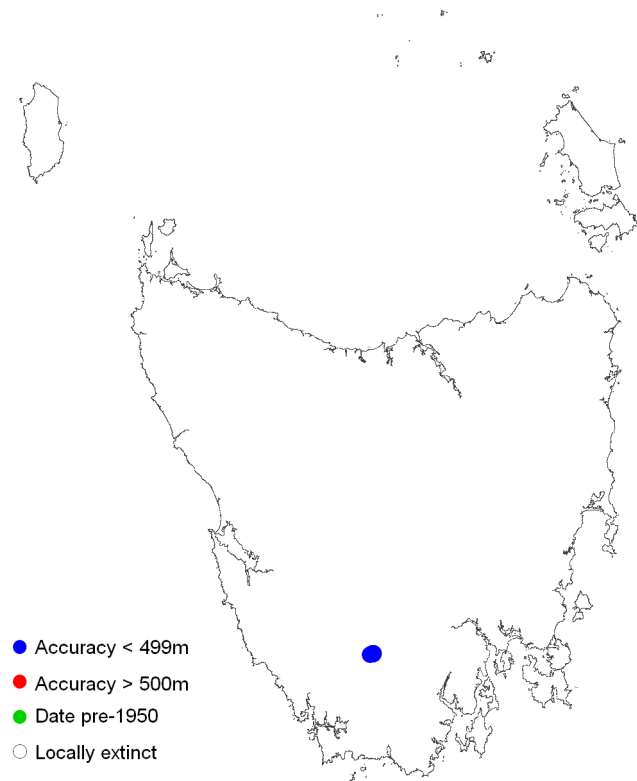
No need for an immediate re-assessment.

Further Information

- Gilfedder, L 1989, *Five Rare Southwest Tasmanian Endemic Plant Species*, Unpublished report to the World Wildlife Fund, Hobart.
- Orchard, AE & Davies, JB 1985, *Oreoporanthera*, a New Zealand endemic plant genus discovered in Tasmania, *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania* 119: 61–63.
- Threatened Species Section (2006). *Flora Recovery Plan: Threatened Alpine Karst Flora: Oreoporanthera petalifera and Sagina diemensis 2006–2010*. Department of Primary Industries and Water, Hobart.

Tasmanian Distribution

(Extracted from the Natural Values Atlas, March 2008)



1:25 000 Map Sheets

Anne.

Date last modified: 11/03/2008 (taxonomy updated 21/10/2011).

View

<http://www.dpiw.tas.gov.au/threatenedspecieslists>

Contact details

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Permit

It is an offence to collect, disturb, damage or destroy this species unless under permit.