Wilsonia humilis

Image by Matthew Larcombe

FAMILY: CONVOLVULACEAE

BOTANICAL NAME: *Wilsonia humilis,* R.Br., *Prodr*. 490 (1810)

COMMON NAME: Silky wilsonia

COMMONWEALTH STATUS: (*EPBC Act*) Not Listed

TASMANIAN STATUS: (*TSP Act*) rare

Description

A slender woody plant with a short, erect, underground stem bearing stout, woody roots and a number of prostrate stems, distinguished by its imbricates leaves, mat-forming habit and silvery-grey appearance. **Stems:** The stems may spread along the ground for 15–30 cm or more before rooting at the tips and again spreading. The main stems have many short side branches. **Leaves:** The leaves are crowded onto the short branches, overlapping like roof-tiles and arranged in two opposite rows and stalkless (Plate 1). They are 1.5–3 mm long, thick, concave and egg-shaped or oblong with rounded tips, and grey-green with silky hairs. **Flowers:** The flowers are stalkless and solitary near the tips of the short branches. They are white in colour, and have a 4–6 mm long corolla tube with 2–3 mm long spreading lobes, and 5 exserted stamens. Flowering is mainly in spring to summer. **Fruit:** Capsule, c. 3 mm long, with one or two seeds (description from Curtis 1967 and Walsh & Entwisle 1999).

Distribution and Habitat

Wilsonia humilis occurs throughout temperate Australia (Walsh & Entwisle 1999). In Tasmania, the species is locally common within salt marshes in the Pitt Water – Sorell area near Hobart, with occurrences at Moulting Lagoon, Cape Portland and Flinders Island (Curtis 1967, Kirkpatrick & Glasby 1981, Schahinger & Smith 2008). Small colonies have also been recorded from Boomer Marsh near Dunalley (Curtis & Somerville 1947) and, atypically, from the margins of a (brackish) wetland in the Northern Midlands where it co-occurs with the rare *Wilsonia rotundifolia* (J.A. Smith 2010, pers. comm.). The species' coastal habitat includes graminoid and succulent salt marsh (Plate 1), with species such as coast speargrass (*Austrostipa stipoides*), glassworts (*Sarcocornia* spp., *Sclerostegia arbuscula*), and creeping brookweed (*Samolus repens*).

Key Sites and Populations

Key sites include Coal River, Duckhole Rivulet, Iron Creek Bay (Sorell), Long Point (Moulting Lagoon), Long Point Road on Flinders Island, Cape Portland, Boomer Bay and Tunbridge.

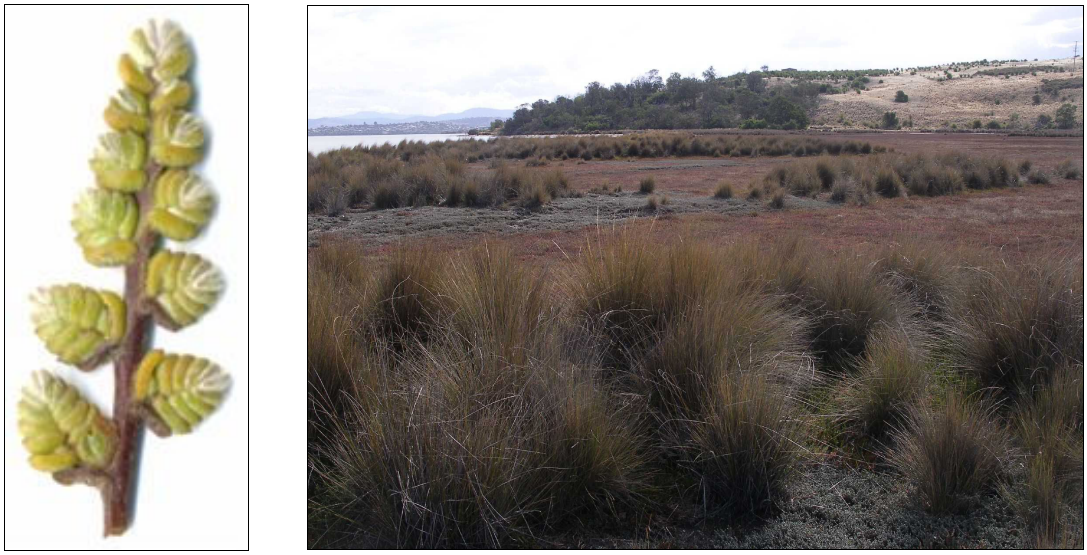


Plate 1. *Wilsonia humilis*: (left) leaf detail; (right) forming solid (grey) mats within a mosaic of graminoid and succulent salt marsh at Iron Creek Bay (Images by Richard Schahinger)

Known Reserves

Populations at Iron Creek Bay and Boomer Bay are within Public Reserves — both areas have been recommended to become Conservation Areas (CLAC Project Team 2005). Populations at Railway Point (Pitt Water), Long Point and Tunbridge are covered by conservation covenants under the Tasmanian *Nature Conservation Act 2002*.

Ecology and Management

The species' salt marsh habitat may be at risk from the following (Kirkpatrick & Glasby 1981; Schahinger & Smith 2008):

- landfill;
- catchment modification;
- fire;
- grazing;
- off-road vehicles;
- weed invasion, especially African boxthorn (*Lycium ferocissimum*);
- rising sea levels associated with climate change.

Conservation Status Assessment

There is no need for a reassessment of the species' conservation status at this time.

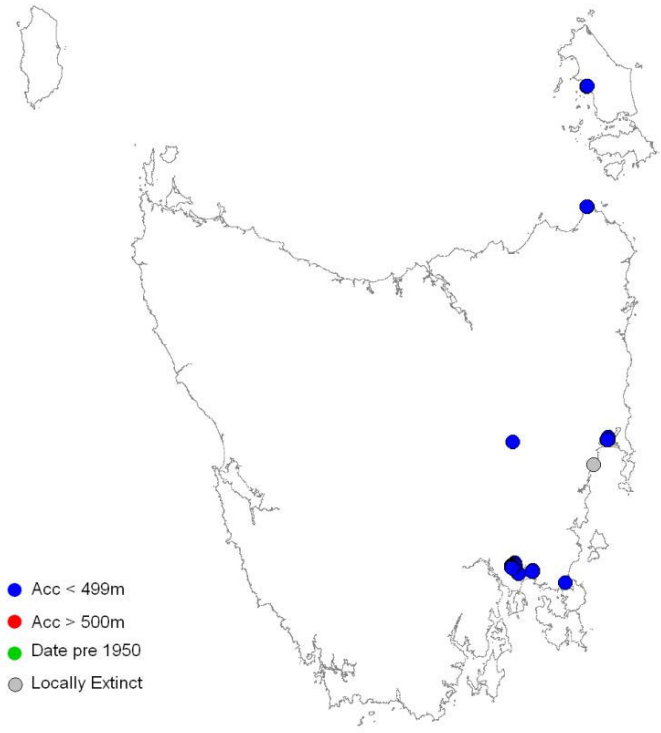
Further Information

- CLAC Project Team (2005). *Crown Land Assessment and Classification Project: Consultation Report and Recommended Allocations for the Municipality of Sorell*. Department of Primary Industries and Water, Hobart.
- Curtis, W.M. (1967). *The Student's Flora of Tasmania.* Part 3, Government Printer, Hobart.

- Curtis, W.M., & Somerville, J. (1947). Boomer Marsh – a preliminary botanical and historical survey. *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania*, 151–157
- Kirkpatrick, J.B., & Glasby, J. (1981). *Salt marshes in Tasmania: their distribution, community composition and conservation.* Occasional Paper Number 8, Department of Geography, University of Tasmania.
- Schahinger, R., & Smith, A. (2008). *Threatened flora surveys of salt marshes in southern Tasmania: March – May 2008*. Threatened Species Section, Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment, Hobart.
- Walsh, N.G., & Entwisle, T.J. (1999). *Flora of Victoria Volume 4. Dicotyledons: Cornaceae to Asteraceae.* Inkata Press, Melbourne.

Tasmanian Distribution

(As per Threatened Species Section records, January 2010)



1:25 000 Map Sheets

Cranbrook, Dunalley, Ellinthorp, Hobart, Leventhorpe, Lyme Regis, Mayfield, Richmond, Sorell.

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View

http://www.dpipwe.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.