

Peraxilla colensoi

COMMON NAME

Scarlet mistletoe, korukoru, pirita, roeroe

SYNONYMS

Elytranthe colensoi (Hook.f.) Engl. Loranthus colensoi Hook. f.

FAMILY

Loranthaceae

AUTHORITY

Peraxilla colensoi (Hook.f.) Tiegh.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

Yes

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

PERCOL

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n= 24

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: CD

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: CD

2009 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: CD

2004 | Gradual Decline

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Fleshy shrub to 3m wide growing on outer branches of beech trees with glossy green fleshy paired leaves and masses of red tubular flowers. Leaves to 8cm long, smooth with a red edge. Flowers to 2.5cm long. Fallen petals litter forest floor under plants. Fruit yellow.

DISTRIBUTION

North and South Island, but common only in southern parts of the South Island.

HABITAT

A parasite mainly found in silver beech forest but has been recorded on 16 host species (9 exotic) in New Zealand including red beech and black beech. Tui (*Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae*) and bellbird (*Anthonis melanura*) disperse this species in the North Island.



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DETAILED DESCRIPTION

A shrub up to 3 m across. It parasitises further out on branches of its host than *Peraxilla tetrapetala*. The veins on leaves are hardly evident and only the midrib is conspicuous. Leaf tips are never notched and the leaves themselves are large and never blistered. The leaves sit in pairs on opposite sides of the stem and are thick and have a leathery texture. Leaf margins are usually smooth with red slightly rough margins. Masses of scarlet flowers make this plant very obvious from October - January. Flower heads have groups of 3-10 flowers and are up to 60 mm long. The ripe fruit are yellow/golden and are small, fleshy and oval.

SIMILAR TAXA

Peraxilla tetrapetala, *Ileostylus micranthus*. *Peraxilla colensoi* is a larger plant with larger leaves than *P. tetrapetala*, has flowers in clumps of 3-10 and grows on silver beech. *P. tetrapetala* has leaves with blister galls, flowers in clumps of 1-3 and grows on black or mountain beech. *Ileostylus micranthus* does not grow on beech trees and has small, greenish flowers.

FLOWERING

October to January

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Can be grown from fresh seed placed on suitable host tissue (ideally *Nothofagus menziesii*). Although seed germinates readily the ability of the seedling to form a firm host is rather variable. Failure rates are high and experimentation with plenty of fresh seed is usually needed.

THREATS

A wide variety of threats are now acknowledged as working in unison to cause the national decline of this and allied leafy mistletoes species. The most obvious threat seems to be brush tailed possums (*Trichosurus vulpecula*), which heavily browse mistletoes, to such an extent that they are held as the primary cause for the loss of the beech mistletoes from large parts of the countries beech forest.

ETYMOLOGY

colensoi: Named after William Colenso (7 November 1811 - 10 February 1899) who was a Cornish Christian missionary to New Zealand, and also a printer, botanist, explorer and politician.

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

OTHER LINKS

[Image of the haustoria of *Peraxilla colensoi* by John Dawson \(from Forest Vines to Snow Tussocks\).](#)

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange for NZPCN (1 June 2013)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

[Simpson, M.J.A. 1976. *Elytranthe* in the vicinity of Nelson Lakes National Park. Wellington Botanical Society Bulletin, 39: 39-40](#)

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/peraxilla-colensoi/>