

Myosotis oreophila

SYNONYMS

None (first described in 1896).

FAMILY

Boraginaceae

AUTHORITY

Myosotis oreophila Petrie

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: EF, St, Sp

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: EF, Sp, St

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: EF

2004 | Range Restricted

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. South Island: Central Otago.

HABITAT

According to research by Rebecca Stanley *Myosotis oreophila* is now known from only one site where it is confined to c. 1.5 ha of fellfield (stony pavement of large and splintered blocks of schist) at 1590 m a.s.l. Here it grows with *Dracophyllum muscoides*, *Raoulia hectori* and a diverse array of lichens.



Myosotis oreophila. Photographer: Bec Stanley, Licence: CC BY-SA.



Myosotis oreophila. Photographer: Bec Stanley, Licence: CC BY-SA.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Loosely tufted perennial herb. Rosette-leaves up to 40 × 10 mm, linear-spathulate, lamina tapering gradually into broad petiole of about the same length, tip obtuse, apiculate; hairs long, rather stiff, closely appressed, on upper surface almost touching mostly straight, some retrorse, on undersurface sparse, mostly all retrorse. Lateral branches few, ascending to erect, 70 mm or more long, leafy to cyme, internodes less than leaves. Stem-leaves c. 15 × 2 mm, linear-oblong, tip subacute; hairs on upper surface mostly long, stiff, appressed, on undersurface sparser and about half of them retrorse. Cymes simple, ebracteate, compact and c.20 mm long in fruit; internodes and pedicels very short. Calyx 6-9 mm long, lobes cut to less than half calyx length, narrow-oblong and subacute, hairs on lobes long and slightly flexuous, long ones towards base slightly hooked with underlayer of shorter appressed retrorse hairs. Corolla one-half longer than the calyx, funnellform, white, the lobes 5, spreading, and obtusely rounded. Stamens 5, very slightly exerted; filaments about equal in length to anthers; anthers large, shortly exerted, springing from the base of the corolla lobes; scales obscure. Style twice as long as calyx, slender. Nutlet 1.8-2.4 × 1.0-1.2 mm, ovate to ovate-elliptic or oblong-elliptic, black.

SIMILAR TAXA

Recognised by the stamen filaments which are about the same length as the anthers, rosette-leaves which are distinctly broader than the stem leaves, by the stiff, smoothly appressed hairs - and especially by the presence of retrorse hairs on the rosette-leaves (especially the abaxial surface). In the original description of the species the naming author Petrie noted that the flowers of *M. oreophila* were purple (see Allan 1961). However, all subsequent gatherings of this species have white flowers - and it seems likely that flower colour is an artifact of drying, it having been observed that some white-flowered myosoti (such as for example *M. colensoi*) on drying, over time change their flower colour to pale blue. This phenomena is also present in *Wahlenbergia*, and was it seems the basis for the white-flowered *Geum divergens* being described as having yellow flowers (New Zealand *Geum* flowers fade to yellow in herbarium conditions - often within months of drying). Whether this observation accounts for Petrie's account of a purple-flowered *Myosotis oreophila* remains to be tested. Irrespective to date no purple-flowered *M. oreophila* has yet been seen in the wild.

FLOWERING

December - January

FLOWER COLOURS

White

FRUITING

January - April

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Unknown. Likely to be difficult. Probably best grown in an alpine house or rock garden

THREATS

This species faces no specific threats though the population is very small (covering an area of 1.5 ha) and in terms of density and size it fluctuates widely from year to year indicating that it is (like many *Myosotis taxa*) an opportunistic species responding quickly to favorable temperatures and conditions (R. J. Stanley pers. comm.). Not thought to be palatable to hares which are present within its habitat. Hawkweed (*Pilosella officinarum*) has been found in the general area but there is no evidence that it competes with *Myosotis oreophila*. *M. oreophila*, in common with many alpine myosoti has better seed set if plants are outcrossed, though it can still set good quality seed through selfing. It was originally described from plants gathered on Mt Ida where it has never been seen since.

ETYMOLOGY

myosotis: Mouse-eared

oreophila: Mountain lover

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange. Description based on Allan (1961).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan, H.H. 1961: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. I. Government Printer, Wellington.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Myosotis oreophila* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. <https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/myosotis-oreophila/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/myosotis-oreophila/>