

Schoenus fluitans

COMMON NAME

floating schoenus

SYNONYMS

None

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Schoenus fluitans Hook.f.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 10

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, RR, SO, Sp

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR, SO, Sp

2009 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: PD, RR, SO, Sp

2004 | Range Restricted

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. In New Zealand known from the North Island where it is only found in the Central Volcanic Plateau (from the southern Kaingaroa Plain south) and the Ruahine Ranges. In January 2006 it was discovered on Chatham (Rekohu) Island. Common in Australia.

HABITAT

Mainly upper montane to subalpine (800–1500 m a.s.l.) bogs, tarns, slow flowing streams, muddy ground in and around seasonal pools, and on shallow lake margins. On the Chatham Islands *S. fluitans* has been gathered from restaid peat bogs in shallow pools amongst *Sporadanthus traversii* (F.Muell.) F.Muell.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

Almost always is a hydrophyte, rarely in uplands (non-wetlands).



Close up, inflorescences. Upper Moawhango. Dec 1996. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Licence: CC BY-NC.



In peaty pool, upper Moawhango. Dec 1996. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Densely tufted or floating, usually dark red sedge of shallow pools, slowly flowing streams or muddy ground left by receding waters. **Culms** up to 600 × 0.5 mm, rooted at base, in terrestrial forms rooting freely at leaf nodes, otherwise rest of culm floating. **Leaves** 20–100 mm long, dark red or green, in floating forms distant, otherwise rather tufted, filiform, flaccid in aquatic plants, more rigid in terrestrial plants; margins slightly scabrid toward leaf apices; sheath very long, green or red-brown, margins membranous to chartaceous, prolonged toward apex as a ligule. **Spikelets** 2–4-flowered, in terrestrial forms often buried within leaves and scarcely distinguished, in floating forms more obvious; 7–12 mm long, narrow-linear, solitary, terminal, subtended by a glume-like bract, or rarely 2–3 spikelets distant at the end of the culm, the lower ones subtended by more leaf like bracts. **Glumes** 3–4, lanceolate, obtuse, membranous, light red or pale cream; all fertile or the lowermost empty. **Hypogynous bristles** 0. **Stamens** 3. **Style-branches** 3. **Nut** 2 × 1 mm, obovoid, brown with black patches or entirely black.

SIMILAR TAXA

A very distinctive sedge which is unlikely to be confused with any other species. Plants may be confused with sterile plants of *Juncus bulbosus*, which now grows in similar habitats and can be coloured dark red. However that species has much finer, septate leaves. Within the New Zealand species *Schoenus fluitans* appears to be closely allied to *S. maschalinus*, and terrestrial plants of *S. fluitans* or those left stranded by receding waters in particular have some resemblance to it. However, *S. maschalinus* is a much smaller, more widely creeping plant (up to 1 m diameter) of lowland to montane wetlands and damp ground in forest. It is always coloured bright green (never red), is much more gracile, and has 6 hypogynous bristles (0 in *S. fluitans*), and a white rather than black or brown mottled black nut. Both species share the same chromosome number ($2n = 10$), and nrDNA ITS sequences place them as sister species.

FLOWERING

December

FRUITING

January - April

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown in a peaty soil within a partially submerged pot. Does best in semi-shade. However, it can be rather fickle and difficult to maintain for any length of time. In cultivation plants usually change colour for dark red to lime green.

THREATS

A usually upland species which appears to be locally common over parts of the Central Volcanic Plateau. In some parts of this range it faces competition from *Juncus bulbosus*, and there is some evidence that it has become extinct in the northern part of its range due to that aggressive weed. The 2006 discovery on the Chatham Islands was accidental and its exact status there has yet to be determined.

ETYMOLOGY

schoenus: Rush

fluitans: From the Greek fluito (floating)

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (August 2006). Description adapted from Moore & Edgar (1970).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Moore LB, Edgar E. 1970. Flora of New Zealand, Volume II. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Monocotyledones except Gramineae. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 354 p.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/schoenus-fluitans/>