Olearia telmatica

Common Name(s):
shell akeake, swamp akeake

Current Threat Status (2012):
Threatened - Nationally Vulnerable

Distribution:
Endemic. Chatham Islands: Rekohu (Chatham) and Rangiauria (Pit) Islands.

Habitat:
A conspicuous component of Chatham Island swamp forest, a vegetation type that has developed in sites that are either prone to seasonal flooding or almost permanently flooded throughout the year. These habitats include the margins of lakes, ponds, and slowly flowing rivers and streams, around springs or in other sites with perched water tables.

Features*:
Small tree 4–8 m tall; main trunks up to 400 mm diameter. Bark light grey, shallowly fissured and smoothly textured on trunk and old branches; branchlets 1.6–2.1 mm diameter. Leaves 14–70 × 6–35 mm, elliptic, broadly elliptic, or obovate, upper surface green and glossy, lower surface with dense appressed tomentum, hairs fulvous or off-white, margin entire, apex acute to subacute, base cuneate to attenuate, petiole 4–7 mm long. Inflorescence an axillary panicle with 4–17 capitula, abscissing after fruiting; panicle primary branches in 2–4 opposite pairs, lowest pair of branches each with 1–3 capitula, upper branches each with 1 capitulum, capitula in opposite pairs; covered in fulvous or off-white hairs. Capitulum 5.0–7.2 mm long, involucre cylindrical; involucral bracts 10–14, in 1–2 series, upper surface glabrous, lower surface sparsely to moderately covered with fulvous hairs.Florets 7–11 per capitulum; corolla usually lemon-yellow, sometimes cream to pale yellow. Achenes 1.4–1.7 × 0.6–0.7 mm, narrowly cylindric, light brown, with 4–5 pale ribs, sparsely to moderately hairy; pappus 2.8–4.2 mm long, finely scabrid.

Flowering:          Fruiting:
August – October   October – January

Threats:
Shell akeake was formerly widespread across the two main islands, Rekohu (Chatham Island) and Rangiauria (Pit Island). However most of its swamp forest habitat has now been cleared and there are very few places where this habitat survives intact. Most of the remaining swamp forest remnants on the islands are unfenced and stock have frequent access, and peripheral damage caused by wind throw, and the drying out of the peat soils are serious threats both to the species and this vegetation type. Another serious threat is recruitment failure. While seedlings are frequently seen in the more intact, and wetter swamp forest remnants, it seems that very few of these reach maturity.

*Attribution:

References and further reading:

For more information, visit: