Metrosideros bartlettii

Common Name(s):
  rata moehau, Bartlett’s rata

Current Threat Status (2012):
  Threatened - Nationally Critical

Distribution:
  Endemic. North Island, Northland, Te Paki, where it is only known from three forest remnants near Spirits Bay. These are Radar Bush, Kohuronaki and Unuwhao Bush.

Habitat:
  An emergent or canopy tree of northern coastal and lowland broad-leaved forest. Usually starting life as an epiphyte on puriri (Vitex lucens), taraire (Beilschmedia tarairi), rewarewa (Knightia excelsa) and tree ferns (Cyathea spp.). Occasional specimens have been found growing terrestrially on rock outcrops, boulders and cliff faces.

Features*:
  Tree up to 30 m with a trunk up to 1.5 m diameter, often initially epiphytic on trees or tree ferns; bark pale grey to whitish, spongy, separating into soft flakes, shedding freely; young twigs dark red, 4-angled to rounded and with long persistent, white spreading hairs. Leaves on petioles 4–5 x 1 mm, lamina 30–50 × 15–26 mm, elliptic to ovate, base cuneate, apex acute to attenuate, often twisted; young leaves pale green to yellow-green, somewhat glossy, petioles, margins and midribs pubescent, with the hairs tending to persist on midribs and petioles; mature leaves dark green above pale beneath, upper surface glossy, veins evident, lower surface glossy, entire vein network evident, oil glands obscure, midrib raised below, impressed above. Inflorescences with 3–4 pairs of cymules, ± densely tomentose, tomentum of spreading white hairs; bracts and bracteoles shedding early during inflorescence maturation; pedicules up to 9 × 1 mm. Flowers white; pedicels up to 3 × 1 mm; hypanthium 2.5-3.0 ×2.0-2.5 mm; sepals triangular, spreading, 1.0–1.5 × 1.0–1.5 mm; petals elliptic to ovate, 2.5–3.0 × 1.8–0.0 mm; stamens 5–9 mm long; style 10–11 mm long. Fruit hypanthium puberulent, 2.0–2.5 × 2.5–3.0 mm, sepals persistent, deflexed, capsules exserted for 1.5-2.5 mm. Seeds pale orange-yellow, 2.3–3.0 mm long, narrowly elliptic to narrowly oblong, straight or slightly curved.

Flowering:  October - November  
Fruiting:  March - April

Threats:
  There are now only 25 adult Bartlett’s rata left in the wild (down from the 34 known in 1992), mostly on private land and isolated from other specimens. There is negligible viable seed set because there is not an abundance of nectar-feeding birds to pollinate the flowers and Bartlett’s rata is self-incompatible. There is also minimal genetic variation, and most of this occurs on private land. Aside from these problems, the species is at severe risk from browsing animals and fire. Indeed, uncontrolled possums are currently wiping out this tree at the largest population known, which occurs on private land. Bartlett's rata is occasionally cultivated, but most cultivated specimens come from a single tree.

*Attribution:
  Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (30 September 2003). Description adapted from Dawson (1985) supplemented with observations made from herbarium and fresh material.

References and further reading:

For more information, visit: 