

Caladenia alata

SYNONYMS

Caladenia catenata var. *exigua* (Cheeseman) W.M. Curtis; *Caladenia minor* var. *exigua* Cheeseman; *Caladenia exigua* Cheeseman; *Caladenia holmesii* Rupp; *Caladenia carnea* var. *alata* (R.Br.) Domin.; *Caladenia carnea* var. *exigua* (Cheeseman) Rupp; *Petalochilus alatus* (R.Br.) D.L.Jones et M.A. Clem.

FAMILY

Orchidaceae

AUTHORITY

Caladenia alata R.Br.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Orchids

NVS CODE

CALCAT

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

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

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, TO

2004 | Range Restricted

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. North Island from Te Pahi to about Rotorua thence disjunct to the Horowhenua. Exact distribution still unknown it was only recently (1980s) recognised from New Zealand

HABITAT

Coastal to lowland (more rarely montane - up to 800 m a.s.l.). Often in gumland scrub or on open clay pans, in skeletal soils on steep rocky ridges, on the margins of peat bogs or within open sinter and rock in and around geothermal vents. More rarely found in the leaf litter under tall manuka (*Leptospermum scoparium*) dominated scrub or within seral forest. Usually in dry sites and plants are usually withered off and gone by November.



Close up of flower, *Petalochilus alata*.
Photographer: Ian St George



Lake Ohia. Sep 2008. Photographer: Jeremy Rolfe

FEATURES

Terrestrial dark green to reddish-green early spring flowering orchid usually occurring at solitary plants sometimes as small colonies of up to 20 plants. All parts finely but sparsely glandular hairy. Leaf solitary up to 60 x 3 mm long, linear, dark green to reddish-green. Stem erect, slender somewhat wiry, up to 100 mm tall, thin and very wiry, sparsely eglandular-glandular hairy. Floral bracts 1(-2). Flowers 1(-2) up to 10 mm diameter, in lax racemes, perianth very pale mauve, pale pink, reddish or white often suffused pale china blue, if darker coloured usually fading to pink or white near flower centre. Sepals up to 3 mm long, narrowly-lanceolate to broadly lanceolate, apex acute to subacute; dorsal sepal erect, others spreading. Petals up to 3 mm long, lanceolate to broadly lanceolate, apex sharply acute, spreading or projecting forwards. Labellum 3-lobed, marked with transverse cerise bars, disc with 2 more or less equal lines of stalked calli extending nearly to apex, stalks white, clavate, callus heads yellow, lateral lobes erect, column-embracing, more or less entire, often finely crimped to crenulate toward mid-lobe; mid-lobe broadly triangular, strongly recurved under labellum, margins entire, usually bearing a solitary, flattened, orange or yellow callus on either side of mid-lobe base. Column erect to slightly recurved, white or pale pink or mauve, marked with up to 5 darker transverse, red to cerise bars, column wings distinctly broadening toward apex.

SIMILAR TAXA

Easily recognised by the early flowering habit, small size and solitary flower. The flower is often suffused pale china blue, or pinkish, pale mauve or even red. Sometimes it can be completely white. The tepals are distinctively sharply acute. The labellum offers the main distinguishing characters, the lamina, side-lobes are marked with cerise bars. The labellum calli are in two rows, spheroidal and yellow-topped, while the mid-lobe has a distinctive curled under yellow or orange tip and it usually bears at its base, on either side, a single flattened orange or dark sulphur yellow marginal callus. The column is weakly curved and marked with cerise bars.

FLOWERING

August - November

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, White

FRUITING

October - January

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult - should not be removed from the wild

THREATS

In New Zealand *Caladenia alata* is a biologically sparse species usually occurring in diffuse, often widely scattered populations of few to many individuals.

ETYMOLOGY

alata: Winged

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Jones et al. (2001) revived the genus *Petalochilus* R.S.Rogers (erected by Rogers (1924) for what has come to be viewed as a peloric state of *Caladenia* R.Br. - see Moore & Edgar (1970)) for a distinct clade of mostly New Zealand orchids that had usually been referred to as *Caladenia*. Subsequently Hopper et al. (2004) showed how the reorganisation of *Caladenia* by Jones et al. (2001) was unworkable and they recommended a return to *Caladenia* and the other allied Australian genera that had been recognised previously. Following discussion with S. Hopper and P. Weston (*pers. comm.*, 2011, 2014) the treatment of Hopper et al. (2004) is preferred to that of Jones et al. (2001) and so followed here.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 14 April 2007. Description based on herbarium specimens and subsequently published in de Lange et al. (2007).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- de Lange, P.; Rolfe, J. St George, I. Sawyer J. 2007: Wild orchids of the lower North Island. Department of Conservation, Wellington. 194pp.
- Hopper, S.D.; Brown, A.P. 2004: Robert Brown's *Caladenia* revisited, including a revision of its sister genera *Cyanicula*, *Ericksonella* and *Pheladenia* (Caladeniinae: Orchidaceae). *Australian Systematic Botany* 17: 1-240.
- Jones, D.L.; Clements, M.A.; Sharma, I.K.; Mackenzie, A.M. 2001: A New Classification of *Caladenia* R.Br. (Orchidaceae). *The Orchadian* 13: 389-419.
- Moore, L.B.; Edgar, E. 1970: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. II. Government Printer, Wellington.
- Rogers, R.S. 1924: *Petalochilus*: a New Genus of New Zealand Orchids. *Journal of Botany* 62: 65-67.

CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/caladenia-alata/>