Coprosma macrocarpa subsp. minor

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Not Threatened
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
Shrub with pairs of dark green glossy pointed leaves inhabiting coastal forests of the northern half of the North Island. Leaves to 10cm long, widest at middle, paler underneath. Small papery sheath on stem between the base of the pairs of leaves. Fruit orange, clustered on short stems.

FLOWER COLOURS
Green

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Dioecious. Shrub or small tree up to 6(-9) metres tall. **Trunk** 10(-25) cm diameter. **Bark** thin, initially smooth and cream-coloured, becoming grey-brown and flaky. **Branches** and branchlets stout, glabrous, somewhat shiny. **Petioles** stout, approximately 10-18 mm long. **Stipules** approximately 4-7 mm long, membranous, triangular in face view, sheathing for about half the length, face slightly keeled, tipped with a single broadly conical gland-denticle approximately 1 mm long, stipule soon drying and abscising. **Leaves** 45-90(-140) × 35-50(-100) mm, chartaceous, mid-green, glabrous except when young distal margin lined with minute hairs, broad-ovate, apex subobtuse with short broad acumen, midrib prominent, secondary veins and reticulations evident, domatia present on lower surface. **Male flowers** peduncle 10-20 × 2 mm, flattened, decurved, approximate 5 flowers per primary fascicle, secondary-central fascicle of 7-15 flowers, calyx a dentate rim approximately 0.5 mm tall, with obscure cilia, corolla 9 × 2.5 mm, lobed to about halfway, lobes usually 5, anther 6.5 mm long. **Female flowers** peduncle .05-2(-3) × 2.5 mm, flattened, erect to antrorsely curved, (1-)2(-3) flowers per primary fascicle, secondary-central fascicle of (3-)7 flowers, calyx a dentate rim approximately 0.5 mm tall, with obscure cilia, corolla 8 × 1.5 mm, lobed to about halfway, lobes 4-5, stigma 15 mm long. **Drupe** yellowish to orange, 5-10 × 4-8 mm, broad-oblong. **Seeds** 2, pyrene, oblong, 5-6.5(-7.5) × 3-4 mm, in cross-section semilunar sometimes with pair of longitudinal ridges.

Coprosma macrocarpa subsp. minor. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.

Coromandel, August. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SIMILAR TAXA
Most similar to *Coprosma macrocarpa* ssp. *macrocarpa*, in which the leaves are very similar but are leathery(coriaceous) versus papery (chartaceous). The female flowers if present may be differentiated (from *C. macrocarpa* ssp. *minor*) as they have several differences ovary 1.3 mm diameter (3 mm), corolla lobe 1.3 mm (3 mm), if present the fruit can also be used 17 × 12 mm (7 × 6 mm), pyrene 9 × 6 mm (6.5 × 3.5 mm). *C. macrocarpa* ssp. *macrocarpa* is naturally only found on the Manawatāwhi | Three Kings Islands.
C. robusta is also similar, however this species leaves have a minutely toothed margin which *C. macrocarpa* ssp. *minor* does not. To a trained eye the leaf venation of *C. macrocarpa* ssp. *minor* is also more prominent than that of *C. robusta*.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. Confined to the Te Ika-a-Māui | North Island and near off-shore islands (except the Three Kings Islands) from North Cape south to Kawhia Harbour and Hicks Bay.

HABITAT
Coastal to Montane, (0 – 560 m.a.s.l.). Mostly a coastal species including on off-shore islands, amongst the forest and scrub.

GENUS
Coprosma

FAMILY
Rubiaceae

AUTHORITY
Coprosma macrocarpa subsp. minor R.O.Gardner et Heads ex A.Druce

TAXONOMIC NOTES
In Gardner & Heads(2003), it is suggested that there is good herbarium evidence of this species readily hybridising with *C. propinqua*, *C. repens*, and particularly *C. robusta*.

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
June – October.

FRUITING
August - February.

ETYMOLOGY
coprosma: From the Greek kopros ‘dung’ and osme ‘smell’, referring to the foul smell of the species, literally ‘dung smell’
macrocarpa: Large fruit
minor: Smaller

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY
Key to Coprosma species of New Zealand

NVS CODE
COPMSM

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 44

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened
2012 | Not Threatened
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT Help
Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available. The Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland" Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.
Northland: 2026 | Regionally Not Threatened Help
Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available. The Northland conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation status of indigenous vascular plants in Northland | Taitokerau" Ford et al. 2026 report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Gardner R. 2006. Flowering time in Coprosma macrocarpa subsp. minor (Rubiaceae). *Auckland Botanical Society Journal*, Volume 61: 122-123.
Gardner R. & Heads M. 2003. Coprosma macrocarpa subsp. minor (Rubiaceae), a new subspecies from northern New Zealand. *New Zealand Natural Sciences Journal*, 28:67-80. http://dx.doi.org/10.26021/617

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by MD Ward (December 17th 2025). Description adapted from Gardner 2003 Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence.

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/coprosma-macrocarpa-subsp-minor/

PDF DATE

21 July 2026