

# Corybas carsei

## COMMON NAMES

swamp helmet orchid

## BIOSTATUS

Native

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, OL, TO

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Orchids

## FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, White

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Terrestrial orchid of restiad-dominated peat bogs. Plant 10–30 mm tall at flowering. **Stem** erect. **Leaf** 1–(2), 10–25–(30) mm long, green, sessile, ovate. **Floral bract** 1. **Flower** solitary, conspicuous, raised well above leaf. **Perianth** 8–10–(15) mm long, horizontal. **Dorsal sepal** spatulate from narrow arching claw, obtuse, hooded, slightly shorter than labellum, apex deeply cleft; base to mid section dark maroon-red, fading to yellow-green at apex, faintly striped maroon 2–6 times. **Lateral sepals and petals** linear 4–5–(8) mm long, white, more or less appressed to labellum. **Labellum** tubular, margins overlapping, entire, apex usually extending well beyond dorsal sepal; basal portion dark maroon-red, otherwise white, maroon colour extending as 8–(10) stripes, these almost reaching apex. Internal portion of labellum covered in prominent, retrorse, hair-like calli, forming a distinct band near labellum mouth, extending along mid-line and nerves for about half labellum length.

## SIMILAR TAXA

*Corybas rotundifolius*, is similar but larger. The dorsal sepal lacks the cleft tip seen in *C. carsei*. The labellum is as long or slightly longer than the dorsal sepal, while the internal hairlike inward facing labellar calli are more prominent and extend nearly towards the column. *Corybas rotundifolius* flowers in mid-winter, and is more usually found in forested habits and on the margins of gumland scrub, only rarely does it grow within peat bogs.

## DISTRIBUTION

Possibly endemic (see Notes on taxonomy, below). New Zealand: North Island (from near Kaitaia south to Moanatuatua). Now known in New Zealand only from the Te Reao Arm of the Whangamarino Wetlands near Te Kauwhata, in the Huntly Basin, northern Waikato. Also Australia (New South Wales and Victoria, where it is now regarded as very uncommon).

## HABITAT

Known only from one site where it grows in open *Schoenus* / *Empodisma* sedge/wirerush vegetation, though it was formerly more common in several, now drained, *Sporadanthus*-dominated bogs.



Reao. Photographer: Gillian M. Crowcroft, Date taken: 01/10/1991, Licence: All rights reserved.



Corybas carsei. Photographer: Eric Scanlen, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## THREATS

Wetland drainage and plant collectors have contributed to the decline of this species in the past. The single remaining population is now mainly at risk through natural succession.

## GENUS

*Corybas*

## FAMILY

Orchidaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Corybas carsei* (Cheeseman) Hatch

## SYNONYMS

*Corysanthes carsei* Cheeseman; *Corybas matthewsii* (Cheeseman) Schltr.; *Corysanthes matthewsii* Cheesem.; *Anzybas carsei* (Cheeseman) D.L.Jones et M.A.Clem.

## TAXONOMIC NOTES

Considerable research is underway to investigate the validity of the segregate genera split from *Corybas* R.Br. by Jones et al. (2002). Whilst much of that work has yet to be published, on advice from Australian Orchidologists Peter Weston and Stephen Hopper (pers. comm., July 2011, November 2014), all of the segregate genera recognised for New Zealand by Jones et al. (2002) are returned to *Corybas* (see also Lyon 2014). In addition the taxonomic status of *Corybas carsei* and the Australian *C. fordhamii* needs resolution. Morphologically there seems little to distinguish them. For now *Corybas carsei* is accepted as 'possibly' endemic. If these two species prove conspecific then *C. carsei* as the older name has priority.

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Indeterminate

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

September–(November)

## FRUITING

December

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult—should not be removed from the wild.

## WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

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

## ETYMOLOGY

**corybas**: Helmet flower

## MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

[Key to native orchids of New Zealand](#)

## NVS CODE

CORCAR

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 36

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, EF, OL, RR, TO

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, EF, OL, RR

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, RF, EF, OL

2004 | Threatened – Nationally Critical

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Jones DL, Clements MA, Sharma IK, Mackenzie AM, Molloy BPJ. 2002. Nomenclatural notes arising from studies into the Tribe *Diurideae* (Orchidaceae). *The Orchadian* 13(10): 437–468.

<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/310769#page/2/mode/1up>.

Lyon SP. 2014. Molecular systematics, biogeography, and mycorrhizal associations in the Acianthinae (Orchidaceae), with a focus on the genus *Corybas*. PhD Thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA.

<https://asset.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/UAXO3VHO6P7EH8Y/R/file-19145.pdf>.

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

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (1 January 2005). Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970)

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## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/corybas-carsei/>

## PDF DATE

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