

Galium antarcticum

COMMON NAMES

Antarctic bedstraw

BIOSTATUS

Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Evaluated

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Perennial herb up to 50 mm tall, main stems weak, prostrate, rooting at nodes, leafless; young stems flaccidly erect, sparsely branched, rather leafy, glabrous. Leaves and stipules similar, 4-whorled, 3-4.5 mm long, green tinged with purple, obovate to spatulate, obtuse, minutely notched, thick, somewhat fleshy, glabrous. Flowers solitary in upper axils; pedicels 0.8-1.2 mm long; calyx absent; corolla pinkish-buff; tube 0.3 mm long, lobes 3-4, 1.3 mm long. Stamens 3-4, 0.5-0.7 mm long. Styles 2, free to base, 0.5-0.6 mm long, yellowish; stigmas capitate. Ovary 0.8 mm, dark green, glabrous. Fruits dry, splitting into 2 mericarps, dark brown.

SIMILAR TAXA

Galium antarcticum bears little resemblance to any of the New Zealand species.

DISTRIBUTION

Macquarie Island, also on the Falklands, South Georgia, Crozet, and Kerguelen Islands, and in southern South America (Chile, western Argentina)

HABITAT

A species of damp seepages and low lying turf, often around lake, tarn and stream margins.

THREATS

This is a Macquarie Island endemic and occurs in the New Zealand Botanical Region but it is not encompassed by the New Zealand threat classification process as Macquarie is under the management of Australia. Cats, rats, mice and rabbits introduced by sealers in the early 1800s posed a significant threat to species endemic to Macquarie Island and when cats were initially eradicated nearly a century later there was an explosion in rabbit numbers. Further efforts were made to remove rodents by the Australian Government and in 2014 Macquarie was declared pest free.

Galium antarcticum had been presumed extinct on Macquarie Island until it was rediscovered in 2013.

GENUS

Galium

FAMILY

Rubiaceae



The delicate terminal flowers and fleshy leaves of *Galium antarcticum*. Photographer: Alex Fergus, Date taken: 15/03/2017, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Galium antarcticum growing amongst moss and grass near Skua Lake, Macquarie Island. Photographer: Alex Fergus, Date taken: 15/03/2017, Licence: CC BY-NC.

AUTHORITY

Galium antarcticum Hook.f.

SYNONYMS

None

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

January

FRUITING

February

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Unknown.

STATUS NOTES

This species is included in the NZPCN fact sheets because Macquarie Island is part of the New Zealand Botanical Region. However, Macquarie Island is part of the Australian Territory, and so its administration and threat assessment lies with that nation.

ETYMOLOGY

galium: From the Greek galo 'milk', the leaves of *Galium verum* being used in the past to curdle milk

antarcticum: Antarctic

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Evaluated

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR

2004 | Range Restricted

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange for NZPCN (1 June 2013)

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/galium-antarcticum/>

PDF DATE

25 May 2026