Geranium socolateum

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DPT, RR

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
A geranium of limestone habitats. Similar to *Geranium brevicaule* but differing by the more robust growth habit, longer petiole, larger leaves; these usually grey-green to light grey in colour and with a prominent brown margin up to 3.0 mm wide, and by the larger sepals and petals.



Photographer: Melissa Hutchison, Date taken: 13/11/2020, Licence: CC BY-NC.

FLOWER COLOURS
White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
For a detailed description see Flora of New Zealand



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SIMILAR TAXA
Geranium microphyllum sens. lat. (including plants from Subantarctic Islands, South Island and North Island) differs from *G. socolateum* by its longer, slender, trailing stems (up to 40 cm long), open, loose, straggly growth habit; by the lack of short and compact stems and by the leaves which are broader than long, thinner and distantly placed on trailing stems. Further the basal leaves are not persistent, the infloresences bear several flowers, and these have smaller diameters (8–10 mm across) with smaller petals (6.0–9.0 mm long). *Geranium brevicaule* differs from *G. socolateum* by its more compact growth habit, smaller leaves (usually up to 20 mm diameter), polymorphic leaf colour (green, bronze, purple) but not grey-green to light grey in colour, and by its smaller sepals (4.0–7.0 mm long) and petals (5.0–7.0 mm long).

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. South Island, South Canterbury and North Otago.

HABITAT
A species of open, sparsely vegetated, stable to semi-stable rocky limestone outcrops and associated colluvium, in a range of aspects, including open and sunny or sheltered and shaded. Also found growing amongst open prostrate shrubs and tussock grasses.

THREATS
Heenan & Molloy (2019) note that the total population of *Geranium socolateum* is fewer than 1,000 individuals, with the species occurring in widely scattered populations comprising a few plants. The authors note severe habitat competition from naturalised plants, and the lack of suitable habitat for recruitment suggesting that populations are declining. They recommended that *G. socolateum* be assessed as 'Threatened / Nationally Critical' (Criterion "B" due to the small population with a moderate ongoing or predicted decline of 50–70%). Two subcriteria also apply: (B1) 250–1000 mature individuals and (B3) total area of occupancy ≤ 10 hectares (see Townsend et al. 2008).

GENUS
Geranium

FAMILY
Geraniaceae

AUTHORITY
Geranium socolateum Heenan et Molloy

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
Nov-

FRUITING
Not known

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Not known from cultivation.

ETYMOLOGY
geranium: From the Greek geranos ‘crane’, the fruit of the plant resembling the head and beak of this bird, hence the common name cranesbill.
socolateum: Chocolate i.e. ‘chocolate’ colouration

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING
Heenan PB, Molloy BPJ. 2019. Five new and Nationally Threatened taxa of *Brachyscome*, *Cardamine*, *Convolvulus*, *Geranium* and *Ranunculus* obligate to vulnerable limestone habitats, eastern South Island, New Zealand. *Phytotaxa 415(1)*: 32–48.
Townsend AJ, de Lange PJ, Norton DA, Molloy J, Miskelly C, Duffy C. 2008. New Zealand threat classification system manual. Department of Conservation, Wellington, 35 pp.

ATTRIBUTION
Fact sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange (6 September 2019). Description from Heenan & Molloy (2019).

MORE INFORMATION
https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/geranium-socolateum/

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