

Pimelea traversii subsp. boreus

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: Sp, CD, DPS, DPT, RR

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Bushy shrub to 80 cm tall erect slightly hairy branches bearing pairs of green leaves, hairy white and pink flowers and dry fruit inhabiting limestone areas in eastern Marlborough. Leaves 6–10 mm long by 3–6 mm wide. Fruit hairy, enclosing black seed.

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

A much-branched small to medium-sized shrub up to 800 mm tall (reduced in stature on exposed sites, rocky substrates, and poor soils).

Branches erect, ± fastigiate; branchlets hairy at leaf axils and on receptacles, glabrous or, in some forms, with bands of hair between node buttresses on internodes. **Node buttresses** relatively narrow and intervening internode surfaces sometimes covered with short, villous hair, medium to dark brown or black, usually prominent after leaf fall, stems aging grey-brown, grey or black. **Internodes** 1–4 mm long. **Leaves** decussate, ascending to patent, often closely imbricate, on very short petioles (0.2 mm) or sessile. **Lamina** large, light olive green, sometimes red-margined, moderately thick to distinctly membranous, elliptic to broad elliptic, 6–10 × 3–6 mm, slightly keeled, concave above, obtuse, base angustate or cuneate; margins thickened, slightly down-turned; midvein evident on under side, lateral veins obscure. **Stomata** only on abaxial side. **Inflorescences** many-flowered, pedicels 0.2 mm long, persistent. **Involucral bracts** 4, usually wider than the leaves (6–9 × 4–8 mm). Plants gynodioecious. **Flowers** hairy on outside; inside densely hairy in ovary portion and lower tube, sometimes sparsely hairy in upper tube; fragrant, white, sometimes pinkish with red lower tube. **Calyx lobes** open in salverform fashion. **Female tube** to 6 mm long, ovary portion 4 mm, calyx lobes 2.5 × 1.3 mm. **Staminodes** short, at mouth of tube. **Hermaphrodite tube** to 9 mm long, ovary portion 3 mm, calyx lobes 4 × 2.2 mm; anther filaments inserted below mouth of tube; anthers yellow. **Ovary** with abundant hair at summit, less densely hairy to about half-way down. **Fruits** ovoid, green, drying brown, 4 mm long. **Seeds** ovoid, 3.5 × 1.6 mm. Dried hypanthia persistent and dispersing with fruits inside.

SIMILAR TAXA

Pimelea traversii subsp. *boreus* is confined to north-eastern Marlborough where it grows on limestone and other calcareous rocks. It differs from *subsp. traversii* by its taller size, larger leaves and by the presence of sparse hairs on the stem internodes. *Pimelea traversii* subsp. *exedra* is (at least so far) known from one site on the Livingston Range where it grows on ultramafic rocks. It differs from *subsp. traversii* by the smaller grow habit (up to 250 mm tall) and by having larger flowers. As some of these distinctions seem fairly arbitrary it is clear that further critical study of the range of variation in *P. traversii* using cytological and molecular techniques is needed.



Flaxbourne River. Photographer: Geoffrey M. Rogers, Date taken: 22/04/2011, Licence: CC BY-SA.



Flaxbourne River. Photographer: Geoffrey M. Rogers, Date taken: 22/04/2011, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (eastern Marlborough).

HABITAT

Lowland to montane limestone rock outcrops in open sites or amongst scrub. Exact habitat preferences and associated vegetation unknown.

THREATS

First recognised in June 2008 very little is known about this plant. It is said to be very uncommon. Further survey is needed to determine its exact status.

GENUS

Pimelea

FAMILY

Thymelaeaceae

AUTHORITY

Pimelea traversii subsp. *borea* C.J.Burrows

SYNONYMS

Pimelea traversii subsp. *boreus* C.J.Burrows orth.var.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

October–April

FRUITING

December–June

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Not known from cultivation—see *P. traversii* subsp. *traversii*

ETYMOLOGY

pimelea: from Greek *pimelē*, meaning “lard” or “soft fat,” presumably referring to the oily seeds or fleshy cotyledons.

traversii: Named after William Thomas Locke Travers (1819-1903) who was an Irish lawyer, magistrate, politician, explorer, naturalist, photographer. He lived in New Zealand from 1849 and was a fellow of the Linnean Society.

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: RR, Sp

2009 | Data Deficient | Qualifiers: RR, Sp

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Burrows CJ. 2008. Genus *Pimelea* (Thymelaeaceae) in New Zealand 1. The taxonomic treatment of seven endemic, glabrous-leaved species. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 46(2): 127–176.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00288250809509760>.

ATTRIBUTION

Description based on: Burrows (2008).

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pimelea-traversii-subsp-boreus/>

PDF DATE

27 May 2026