

Pterophylla sylvicola

COMMON NAME

Towai, tawhero

SYNONYMS

Weinmannia sylvicola Sol. ex A.Cunn.; Weinmannia silvicola Sol. ex A.Cunn. orth. var.; Weinmannia silvicola Sol. ex A.Cunn. var. silvicola, Weinmannia silvicola var. betulina (A.Cunn.) Hook.f.

FAMILY

Cunoniaceae

AUTHORITY

Pterophylla sylvicola (Sol. ex A.Cunn.) Pillon et H.C.Hopkins

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

WEISIL

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 30

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Small tree with a blotched trunk bearing leaves consisting of three bluntly-toothed leaflets (lowest pair much smaller) and spikes of small white bristly flowers inhabiting northern North Island. Leaf stem grooved on top, slightly hairy (lens needed). Juveniles with up to nine pairs of leaflets, reddish underneath.

DISTRIBUTION

Occurs from Te Pahi as far as the Waitakere Ranges and Kaimai Range.



Towai. Photographer: Wayne Bennett



Towai. Photographer: Wayne Bennett

FEATURES

Tree up to 15 metres tall or larger with a trunk up to 1 m. diameter; young branchlets, petioles, peduncles and pedicels ± densely pilose-pubescent. Leaves of seedlings simple to 5-jugate, some pairs trifoliolate, membranous; leaflets up to 3 × 1 cm., elliptic to elliptic-obovate in outline, incised-serrate. Leaves of juveniles and of reversion shoots up to 10-jugate, membranous; leaflets ovate-elliptic to elliptic or elliptic-oblong, acute to subacute; terminal leaflet up to 8 × 3 cm., on petiolule c. 1 cm. long; lateral subsessile, diminishing downward from 6 × 3 cm. to 2.5 × 2 cm. Leaves of adults of two main forms (intermediate forms not infrequent): (a) leaflets mostly obtuse, 3-5-foliolate, rarely simple, coriaceous, bluntly crenate-serrate to serrate, obovate-oblong to broad-elliptic or elliptic; terminal leaflet 4-6 × 2-3 cm., on petiolule c. 1 cm. long; lateral 4-3 × 2 cm.;- (b) leaves 3-5-foliolate, rarely simple, coriaceous, leaflets mostly acute to subacute, serrate to crenate-serrate, elliptic; terminal leaflet 4-7 × 2-3 cm., lateral 7-4 × 3-2 cm. Racemes 8-12 cm. long, many-flowered, pedicels 2-3 mm. long, numerous axis; sepals c. 1 mm. long, narrow-ovate to subulate-obtuse, persistent; petals c. 1.5 cm. long, ovate to oblong, white to pale rose; stamens exerted; styles 2.5-4 mm. long, persistent. Capsules 4-5 cm. long, glab. or nearly so; seeds with tuft of hairs at apex and base.

SIMILAR TAXA

The juvenile foliage is similar to that of *Ackama rosifolia*. It can be distinguished by the lack of domatia on the underside of the leaves. Towai also has narrow, linear stipules that fall off early.

FLOWER COLOURS

White

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Pterophylla sylvicola var. *betulina* is not regarded as distinct from *P. sylvicola* by the NZPCN as the characters attributed to it occur sporadically throughout the range of *P. sylvicola* s.s. However, it is true that in some more southerly populations the form known as var. *betulina* can be dominant.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared by P. J. de Lange 17 November 2011: Description adapted from Allan (1961)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan, H.H. 1961: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. I. Government Printer, Wellington.

McKenzie, R. 1960. The distributional overlap of *Weinmannia sylvicola* and *Weinmannia racemosa*. Auckland Botanical Society Journal, 17: 7-8

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pterophylla-sylvicola/>