

Ranunculus recens

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: Sp, CD, DPT, RR

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CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS

Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Tufted, non-rhizomatous herb forming small circular appressed patches 10-50 mm wide. Petiole broad, flat, usually hairy. Leaves yellow-green, dark green, sometimes blotched or entirely chocolate brown, ovate, 3-lobed to about 1.2 toward base, lobes crenate or shallowly pinnatifid, 8-15(-20) mm, sparsely hairy on margins or glabrous. Flowers solitary, 8-10 mm diam., sessile, or rarely on short hairy scapes. Sepals spreading, sparsely hairy. Petals 5, yellow, linear-oblong, nectary single, 0.5 mm from petal base, with very small scale. Receptacle hairy. achenes 30-60, somewhat flattened, glabrous, brick red with dark tips; beak curved 0.5 mm long.

SIMILAR TAXA

A very distinctive plant not easily confused with any other indigenous or naturalised buttercup. It is not closely allied to *R. ranunculoides*, which is a smaller plant of inland southern lake turfs, with quite different, smaller leaves, flowers and chromosome number. Although *R. recens* shows some distinctive variation with regard to leaf colour this does not seem to be, by itself, worthy of further taxonomic segregation.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic to the North, South and Stewart Islands. In the North Island only known from one site in the Moawhango, and from the south Taranaki coastline. In the South Island known from North West Nelson, and the Otago and Foveaux Strait coastline. Local at Masons Bay on Stewart Island. Past records from the Chatham Islands remain unconfirmed and modern field surveys suggest they result from misidentification of seedlings of an complex of unnamed buttercups allied to *R. foliosus* and *R. royi*.

HABITAT

Mainly coastal but also alpine in one North Island location. A species of turf and peaty soils developed over freshwater seepages.

THREATS

A turf species most at risk from weeds and physical damage through trampling by stock and human traffic.

GENUS

Ranunculus

FAMILY

Ranunculaceae

AUTHORITY

Ranunculus recens Kirk



In cultivation. Photographer: Bill Clarkson, Date taken: 29/10/2011, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Otago Peninsula. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

SYNONYMS

None

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

(September-)- October-November

FRUITING

October -January(-April)

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed and remarkably tolerant of most soils and light levels provided plants are well watered. In humid climates plants suffer from powdery mildew.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY

ranunculus: From the Latin 'rana' frog, meaning little frog and probably refers to the plants typical marshy habit where frogs abound

NVS CODE

RANREC

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 48

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

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

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: RR, Sp, St

2009 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: St, Sp

2004 | Gradual Decline

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Critical | Qualifiers: NStr, PF, RR, Sp, TL Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Otago conservation status information is sourced from the "[Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025](#)" Jarvie S et al. (2025) report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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

de Lange, P.J.; Murray, B.G. 2008: *Ranunculus ranceorum*, a new name and rank for *Ranunculus recens* var. *lacustris* G.Simpson, an elusive, rarely seen buttercup of the Fiordland lakes, South Island, New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 46: 1-11.

Webb, C.J.; Sykes, W.R.; Garnock-Jones, P.J. 1988: *Flora of New Zealand. Vol. IV*. Christchurch, DSIR Botany Division.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange (30 August 2003). Description based on Allan (1961), Webb et al. (1988) and fresh specimens - see also de Lange & Murray (2008).

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NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/ranunculus-recens/>

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