Tupeia antarctica

COMMON NAMES
Tāpia, pirita, white mistletoe, tupia, kohuorangi

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: CD, PD
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
Rounded shrub to 1m wide growing on other trees with white bark, finely hairy rounded twigs (lens needed), fleshy variously-shaped bright green leaves and whiteish to pinkish fruit. Leaves 10-70mm long. Flowers tiny.

FLOWER COLOURS
Green, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
A shrubby semi-parasite to 1 m diameter. Leaves are oppositely arranged, variable in shape, 10 to 70 by 10 to 40 mm, slightly fleshy and bright green. Stems are always rounded in cross section near the tips, have pale white to grey bark, and downy or hairy branchlets. Flowers are tiny, greenish-yellow. Fruit are fleshy, white to pink, 5 to 7 mm diameter.

SIMILAR TAXA
Peraxilla colensoi, *P. tetrapetala* and *Trilepidea adamsii* all have colourful flowers. *Ileostylus micranthus* has tiny, yellow-green flowers, a 'bent' style, yellow fruit and young stems that are squarish in cross-section and have multiple attachments to its host. All of these species are hairless.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic to the North and South Islands.

HABITAT
Forest or scrub (often in regenerating vegetation), where it is parasitic on a wide range of hosts including lemonwood/tarata, karo, *Coprosma* species, putaputawētā, five-finger, white maire and native broom.

THREATS
Possum browse is the primary threat to this species. Insect browse, habitat destruction, loss of pollinating and seed-dispersing native birds, collectors, vandalism and fungal disease also threaten this species.

GENUS
Tupeia

FAMILY
Loranthaceae

AUTHORITY
Tupeia antarctica (G.Forst.) Cham. et Schlecht



Close up of foliage. Photographer: Chris Ecroyd, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Tupeia. Photographer: Cathy Jones, Licence: CC BY.

SYNONYMS
Viscum antarcticum G.Forst., V. pubigerum A.Cunn., Tupeia cunninghamii Miq. T. pubigera Miq.

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
Yes

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
Flowers from October to December.

FRUITING
Fruit appear from December to March.

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Difficult. Has been grown successfully by some people but many others have failed. Best success is achieved with seed that has been sown fresh (within one to two days of harvesting) onto a suitable host.

NOTES ON HABITAT AND HOST RANGE
This species will on occasion extend into beech forest where it has been found parasitic on red mistletoe (*Peraxilla tetrapetala*). Favoured indigenous hosts include *Pseudopanax arboreus*, *Carpodetus serratus*, *Nestegis cunninghamii*, *Pittosporum eugenoides*, *P. tenuifolium*, and *Coprosma* spp. At present the species has been recorded from 48 hosts (11 exotic) spread through 32 genera and 20 families (de Lange et al. 1997), though this figure needs revision as since that time many more hosts have been reported.

ETYMOLOGY
tupeia: Named after Tupaia (c. 1725 – December, 26 1770) who was a Tahitian Polynesian navigator and arioi (a kind of priest), originally from the island of Ra'iatea in the Pacific Islands (see Chamisso & Schlechtendal, 1828).
antarctica: Antarctic

NVS CODE
TUPANT

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 24

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: PD
2012 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: CD
2009 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: CD
2004 | Gradual Decline
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES
Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Critical | Qualifiers: DPR, DPT, INC, PF Help
The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland" Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.
Otago: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, NR, NStr, PF, Sp 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

Chamisso, L.K.A.; Schlechtendal, D.F.L. 1828: Lorantheae pp. 203-204. *Linnaea 3(3)*: 200-219.
de Lange, P.J.; Norton, D.A.; Molloy, B.P.J. 1997: An annotated checklist of New Zealand mistletoe (Loranthaceae) hosts. Pp. 83-104. *In*: de Lange P.J.; Norton, D.A. (*eds.*) *New Zealand's loranthaceous mistletoes*. Conference proceedings. Wellington, Department of Conservation.

ATTRIBUTION

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

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MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/tupeia-antarctica/

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